the weekly Standard

JULY 7, 1997 $2.95

THE SUN SETS ON A BRITISH COLONY
MALCOLM BRADBURY

A More Gated Union

Americans have been fleeing cities into suburbs and gated communities. At the same time, the crime rate has been falling dramatically. This is not a coincidence.

by John J. DiIulio, Jr.

Is America Turning Into France?
DAVID FRUM

Recorded History: A Century of Music
JAY NORDLINGER

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the weekly Standard

VOLUME 2, NUMBER 42 • JULY 7, 1997

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The President's Private Life

Bob Woodward reports in the *Washington Post* that independent counsel Ken Starr's office has been interviewing people about Bill Clinton's "private life." The White House responds with outrage that looks orchestrated. Starr, for his part, says his investigators have done no such thing.

Where does this leave matters, besides confused? In principle, most of us would probably go along with the president's friends and agree that prosecutors should show restraint in their investigations. Restraint is a good thing, after all. It's even a good thing for people who aren't prosecutors, and not just in the public sphere. For that matter, most of us would probably agree that even presidents have a "private life," and that the distinction between private and public is worth upholding.

Too bad the president doesn't feel the same way. The latest evidence of his own lack of restraint, and his persistence in conducting his "private" affairs in at least the semi-public eye, comes from *Washingtonian* magazine, which reports in its July issue on an encounter at last April's White House correspondents' dinner. After Clinton finished chatting to "an attractive woman" in a roped-off buffer area, he summoned a photographer standing nearby. The photographer was Larry Downing of *Newsweek*, but because he was wearing a Secret Service pin occasionally provided to members of the media, Clinton apparently thought Downing was a member of the security detail. So the president asked Downing to procure a business card from the woman. Downing dutifully carried out the president's request, but before handing the card to Clinton he ran it by an agent of the Secret Service, which generally tries to prevent people from handing items to the president. This made Clinton none too happy, and he let Downing have it: "You don't have to ask for permission when I tell you to do something. This is my life, and nobody's going to tell me what to do." Spoken like a true gentleman.

Kool and the G-7

If you're the president of the United States and want to give your fellow world leaders a dose of American culture, who do you turn to? Why, Harry Thomason, of course, Hollywood producer, Travelgate impresario, and husband of Arkansan Linda Bloodworth-. And what a show he gave them in Denver, on a big Saturday night during the economic summit: Kool & the Gang, the Sounds of Blackness, Eartha Kitt, Lyle Lovett, Michael Bolton, pow-wow dancers, and—straight from the 1960s—the girl group Ronnie Spector and the Ronettes. It was, you might say, a spectacular that looked like America. Only it almost didn't: Thomason had neglected to book a Hispanic group, which error he remedied before all the G-7 (or -8) partying began.

How did the boys like it? They didn't, needless to say. German chancellor Helmut Kohl looked particularly distraught. A news photo of him suffering through the entertainment is the very picture of misery. Japanese prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto was out like a light, out-sleeping Reagan on his most tired day. And Boris Yeltsin? He again proved himself smarter than his image, retiring to his hotel room before the show began. The next day, French president Jacques Chirac assured Yeltsin that he had done the right thing. Yeltsin allowed as to how he had caught some of the performance on television, then feigned snoring to show what he had thought of it. Maybe next time he should send the rest of the heads of state some of his favorite vodka.

How to Succeed Newt

After the tax cut passed the House last week, the *Washington Post* said speaker Newt Gingrich had improved his "beleaguered" position. Maybe, but the battle to succeed him as Republican leader continues.

A House GOP conference on June 23 amounted to a cattle show among four candidates, the same four Republican leaders who refused to cave with Gingrich and vote for President Clinton's disaster-relief bill. They were asked to explain their votes. Majority leader Dick Armey apologized abjectly. Whip Tom DeLay said he didn't like the pork in the bill. Conference chairman John Boehner said maybe he'd erred. Only Bill Paxon, who chairs the leadership meetings, was defiant. He declared there are simply times when he

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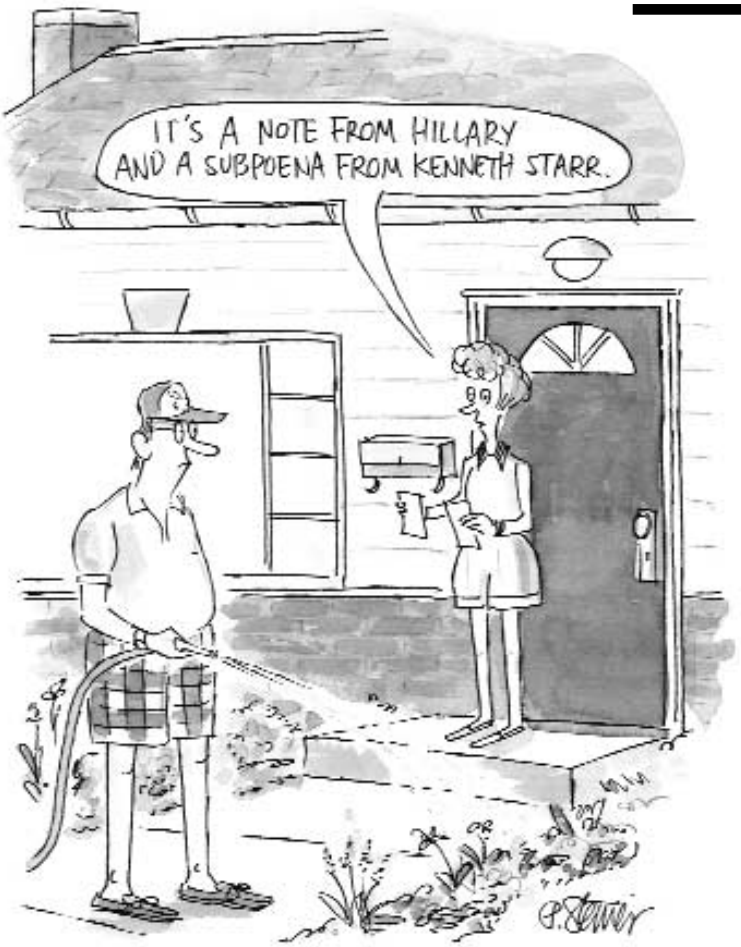

meeting with House Republicans early last week, Bauer's plea on behalf of Chinese liberty was recounted by Gingrich in a slightly different way. Gary Bauer, the speaker disparagingly told his men, had admitted to him that he was only doing "this China stuff" for fund-raising purposes. Several members of Congress—including some who sided with Newt on MFN—were taken aback, since they knew Bauer had put his organization at some risk by agitating against MFN, given the pro-MFN views of some of his biggest donors. This didn't shore up Gingrich's already shaky credibility with his colleagues, and Bauer plans to confront him on the matter next week.

Overturned Again

When the Supreme Court ruled unanimously last week that there is no constitutional right to physician-assisted suicide, it marked the eleventh time this term the high court has reversed Ninth Circuit judge Stephen Reinhardt (subject of a May 5 profile in The Weekly Standard by Matthew Rees, "Judge Reinhardt, the Overturned"). And though the current cast of Supreme Court justices is deeply divided ideologically, this was the ninth time out of the 11 reversals that the justices ruled *unanimously* contra Reinhardt.

What does it mean to be overturned by the Supreme Court 11 times in one year? There's no modern precedent for a judge having so many of his opinions reversed in one Supreme Court term. Being reversed is roughly like being given a speeding ticket. It's embarrassing if it happens once. Eleven times, and you should lose your license.

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won't go along meekly. Paxon, by the way, delivered a strong anti-MFN speech the next day. The week's winner of the sweepstakes to succeed Gingrich: Paxon.

How Not to Succeed, Newt

On or about June 11, according to Liu Qing of the organization Human Rights in China, Beijing was engineering a savage prison beating of Wei Jingsheng, the country's most notable political detainee. On our side of the Pacific, House speaker Newt Gingrich was striking out at Gary Bauer of the Family Research Council, who has made himself America's foremost critic of China appeasement.

In a private meeting, Bauer had urged the speaker to delay the MFN vote. He tried to appeal to Gingrich's partisan interests, telling him he'd heard that Republican fund-raising letters criticizing Clinton administration China policy had generated a lot of money. In a

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Yes to Trade With China

Thank you for mentioning my opposition to cutting off trade with China in "No to Appeasement" (June 23). My position, however, is based more on economics and faith in freedom than "thundering" about shirts.

In his final State of the Union address, President Reagan said that "a creative, competitive America is the answer to a changing world, not trade wars that would close doors, create great barriers, and destroy millions of jobs. Where others seek to throw up barriers, we seek to bring them down; where others take counsel of their fears, we follow our hopes." That's exactly the choice we have with China.

The American government's first responsibility is to enact policies that benefit working Americans and their families. It is no accident that commerce with China puts food on the tables of more than 200,000 working American families. It also inoculates the Chinese people with a dose of freedom that China's government can never suppress or eject.

Sen. Phil Gramm
Washington, DC

Great in Every Sense

Three cheers to David Brooks and The Weekly Standard for putting "Bully for America:What Teddy Roosevelt Teaches" (June 23) on the cover. TR was a great man. He proved that an intellectual could also unashamedly be a public man. He was part of a tradition—with Pericles and Churchill—of public scholars who could match their critics in intellect and outdo them in style.

Tim Goeglein
Washington, DC

David Brooks's article is of particular interest because it attempts to bring Roosevelt into the conservative tradition. Historians and others have often debated how to classify TR, and this article is an important contribution to the ongoing debate.

John A. Gable
Theodore Roosevelt Assn.
Oyster Bay, NY

Religion and The State

In defending federal funding for Christian churches ("The Coming of the Super-Preachers," June 23), John J. DiIulio Jr. does not seem to understand the real threats that government funding poses to religion. There are many problems but the main one is a difference in focus: Government's focus is temporal, while the church's focus must be eternal.

Conservatives like evangelical Christianity because it tends to lower crime rates, produce stable marriages, and reduce teen promiscuity, but these are merely pleasant side effects of a much more important eternal matter—the reconciliation between rebellious sinners and an angry God by grace alone,

through faith alone. The mainline Protestant denominations offer a different model. They decided long ago to focus on this world, and the result has been spiritual death and temporal uselessness.

This shouldn't be a surprise because Jesus was quite clear on the matter. "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness," he said, "and all these things shall be added to you." If we seek temporal things first, or seek His Kingdom because it is useful, we will get nothing. If the main goal of the evangelical church in inner cities is to lower crime rates instead of saving souls, it will accomplish neither.

Government support almost inevitably leads the church into just such a destructive emphasis on this-worldly things. Conservatives must understand that if we promote religion for the wrong reasons or in the wrong ways, we risk killing the goose that produces the golden temporal eggs.

Timothy Lamer
Falls Church, VA

John J. DiIulio Jr. is right on target. All cultures thrive on some form of belief in the spiritual world in order to unite their society, direct individual energy towards the benefit of all, and provide purpose to life. The revival of the Christian movement is not an effort to just gain individual salvation, but to instill religion, a vital element of any culture.

If the churches have identified the problem and are out there trying to solve it in the inner city, why shouldn't they get financial help? Is it because the churches will do this work anyway? Or is it because bureaucrats do not believe that prayer works? Prayer changes people, and the people do the hard work needed to sustain our society. Maybe it's what the bureaucrats should be praying for.

Deborah K. Greco
Weirton, WV

The Secular Threat

Mark Miller's review ("An Uncertain People," June 23) of Elliott Abrams's new book was a fine one. He neglected, however, to mention an area in which Abrams asserts the Jewish establishment could learn from the Orthodox community: the battle over secularism. Miller writes that "Abrams surveys Supreme Court religion jurisprudence and the unwavering support that Jews have provided the secularist side." This overlooks Abrams's explicit recognition that the Orthodox community, as represented by the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations and others, has consistently opposed the Jewish establishment in these cases for over 30 years.

Nathan J. Diament
New York, NY

The question of Jewish continuity skirts around the real issue. Every American Jew must ask, "Is it worthwhile for me to preserve my Jewish

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identity?" Miller alludes to this issue in his review, but the question is not being asked by outsiders determining whether the Jewish people is fit for survival. It is being asked by Jews of themselves. The question should not be, "Is it worthwhile to preserve the Jewish people," but, "Is it worthwhile for me to cultivate a Jewish identity?" In other words, "Why be a Jew?" Answers to these questions should be sought with an eye towards finding the meaning, depth, and truth of Judaism.

ADAM SINGER
WASHINGTON, DC

A CARTON OF LIES

The excellent editorial "Pack of Lies" (June 16) exposed the bogus statistics and general dishonesty of the anti-Joe Camel campaign of the anti-smoking policymakers. Unfortunately, the whole war on smoking is based on these bogus statistics and defamation of honest scientists who criticized them.

It is now accepted as gospel that 400,000 Americans die from smoking annually. This Centers for Disease Control (CDC) number is nothing but a computer-generated estimate. It is based on an erroneous model, ignores all the rules of epidemiology, and vastly inflates the effects of smoking.

Second only to the 400,000 lie is the passive smoking or ETS (Environmental Tobacco Smoke) lie. The EPA report naming ETS a Class A carcinogen is a triumph of politics over science, and a symbol of the corruption of science by government.

What's worse, anti-smoking policymakers ignore the benefits of smoking. Smokers are less obese than non-smokers. Since obesity is a risk factor for heart disease, diabetes, and strokes, the prevention of obesity should count as a benefit. There is increasing evidence that smoking reduces the incidence of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Smoking also ameliorates the symptoms of schizophrenia. But scientists in these fields have a great deal of trouble getting funding because of opposition to any good word for tobacco.

And now we have the tobacco settlement, resulting from a barrage of lawsuits brought by 40 states attorneys general. These suits are totally unfounded, since economists, with rare unanimity, have shown that smokers are not a net cost to the government, but a saving. Smokers pay heavy cigarette taxes, and their life expectancy is somewhat less than non-smokers' (by three to five years), they collect less in Social Security, pensions, Medicare, and Medicaid. A complete report on these economic matters was issued by the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress in March 1994.

The war on smoking is a disaster, for civil liberties, for science, and for the credibility of the government and its health agencies. It is also a disaster for the public health and welfare because it diverts attention and resources from the real problems, such as alcohol abuse, drug abuse, and poverty.

ROSALIND B. MARIMONT
SILVER SPRING, MD

NOT A SIMPLE POPE

Thanks to Russell Hittinger for his level-headed exposition of the Pope's recent visit to Poland ("The Pope Hits Home," June 23), as compelling an event as there has been in his pontificate. It goes without saying that American news reports about this pope tend toward oversimplification. This habit, perhaps only partly due to journalistic convention, reduces the pontiff to a purely sentimental figure. Hittinger parses out something sensible from the trip in a nicely instructive way. Of course, it couldn't be as simple as news reports would have people believe, but the simplistic paradigm is usually taken as the last word.

STEPHEN J. MIKESELL
LIMA, OH

WE'RE STILL NUMBER ONE

Andrew Ferguson ("Those Crazy Americans," June 23) was right on. Who cares how other nations view us? Whom do they call to solve their problems? Ferguson did omit one description from "How *We* See Them": crybabies.

PABLO GERSTEN
WASHINGTON, DC

I would be pretty near the end of the line of those inclined to put in a good word for the *New York Times Magazine*. But surely some of our faults enumerated by foreign critics are regrettably on target. The critics actually overlooked quite a bit, particularly some unseemly quirks endemic among American youth. They are academically poor, excessive in self-esteem, and hell-bent to become the world's most ill clad.

But America must be a darn good place to be. The lines and droves of immigrants, legal and otherwise, are primarily oriented toward our borders. When I try to conjure up the name of a country that would come in second, I can't even come up with a "next best."

ROGER N. PAGE
EUGENE, OR

REVOLTING ROSIE

Matt Labash deserves a raise. His hammer job on Rosie O'Donnell ("'Nice,' 'Real,' Revolting," June 9) was another in a great series of caustic sarcasms that I always look forward to.

Kent Lemon deserves a raise too for that great pig nose he put on the human version of junk mail.

CHRISTOPHER FESSLER
THERESA, NY

If Matt Labash feels that Rosie O'Donnell epitomizes American culture's moral decay, that is what he should have written, rather than laboring on for five and one-half columns about her personal peccadilloes and harmless talk-show banter. She's a symptom, a sign, but not important. Butting heads with America's most popular cultural icon is a losing proposition. It only made your male-heavy staff appear envious, misogynous, and homophobic.

J. CLIFF MCSPARRAN
SANDERSON, TX

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Casual

From Singular to Plural

Marriage is the final event of innumerable movies and novels. The couple is pronounced man and wife, they kiss, and the closing credits roll, or the book runs out of words. Marriage is thus treated as a conclusion, an ending, an act of completion. And to be sure, it is. But it is also the beginning of something, and to find out what that something is like, there are few novels and movies. I have had to turn instead to my long-married friends for guidance.

Married a month myself, I have become an eager pupil. I want to learn how married couples do things. Which household errands are run separately, which ones together? Who keeps track of the schedule? Who handles the money? If there is only one car, who drives it? And on and on.

I was an expert on being single by dint of the fact that I was single for 36 years. I have developed so many theories and ideas about the varying natures of single men and single women that I could teach a Learning Annex course. I could look at an unmarried couple in a bar and almost instantly know how long they had been going out, which one wanted to get married and which one didn't, and whether it would last. But I am bereft of theories when it comes to marriage; I am on unfamiliar territory even in my own living room, where I find myself wandering around unsure where I should sit. Is this "my" chair, or is it my wife's (amazing to write those two words)? Can I just turn on the TV while she is reading the paper, or would that be an intrusion? Do I get to pick the show, or should we consult?

My friends are all amused by my inquiries. Don't rush things, they say. There are no set formulas. Domestic matters work themselves out over time, and in any case, nothing is set in stone; things change, you adapt.

They are right, too, and yet I keep asking the questions: When you were first married, did you want to go out more and party until the kids arrived and you could party no longer? Or did you feel the urge to stay home and enjoy the nest? Is it okay, when you are driving in the car with your spouse, to fall silent for five minutes at a time, or is that an indication that you are going to turn into one of those couples you see, married 30 years, who sit facing each other in restaurants and do not speak during an entire meal?

As an expert on the single life, I believed the old cliché that men feared commitment because of its permanence—that men basically took the message of cinematic romance far too literally and figured marriage was synonymous with the words "The End." Actually, though, there is nothing that feels quite as static and permanent as the life of a single man because no matter the adventure, you always end up back in the same place: alone on a weekend morning with nothing to do all day.

Maybe the cliché has it exactly backwards. Maybe by getting married, you slowly learn to accept a certain measure of impermanence in every other facet of existence but your romantic life. Impermanence isn't quite the right word, though—"instability" might be better.

Marriage is, of course, supposed to be stabilizing, but it is constantly subjected to experiences any single person would find horribly disruptive to his equilibrium. Put two people in a room, and suddenly a difficulty that besets one of them has a direct effect on both. That is destabilizing. So is the birth of children, who introduce sleeplessness, demands, needs, and a whole new range of emotions into the hearts of their parents.

Now my wife and I are saving to buy a house, and I am looking forward to that—what could be more permanent than a house, especially for someone who has lived his entire life in apartments? But suddenly I am hearing tales I never paid attention to before—stories about roofs that need replacing, or water damage following a flood, or a contractor who does a really lousy job. Even something as solid and steady as a house might be subject to the instabilities caused by nature itself.

So I guess the questions I am asking are all a way of seeking reassurance that marriage has rules and regulations that will come to be as clear to me in their way as the ones that governed my life when I was single. My wife needs no such reassurance. Everything is going great, she says; we get along so well that we will be able to work out whatever differences we have without too much trouble. I love her all the more when I hear her speak such words; in her calm, there is the permanence I seek.

John Podhoretz

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the weekly Standard

Playing Unfair

At the 1995 National Junior College Athletic Association track-and-field championships in Odessa, Texas, James Beckford pulled off the third longest triple jump in history. He missed a 10-year-old world record by two inches. Beckford's team, Blinn College, went on to demolish its competition and take its ninth consecutive national outdoor title since 1987. Earlier in the year, Blinn had won its ninth consecutive indoor title—to go with two national cross-country championships and a storied past that includes 11 Olympians and a U.S. gold medal in 1992 for 1,600-meter-relay runner Darnell Hall.

There had never been an American track-and-field program like this. But the following year, Blinn College was due to begin reporting to the federal Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights under Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments. And it could not comply. Blinn is a small, cash-strapped school, and its track-and-field program for men represented a full 25 percent of its limited sports scholarships. That skewed the composition of its varsity offerings toward males. So in 1995, hopelessly boxed in, the Blinn trustees voted to kill men's track and field and create women's softball and volleyball teams instead. The Odessa meet was the school's last—forever.

> THERE ARE 80,000 MORE MEN THAN WOMEN PLAYING COLLEGE SPORTS. AS THINGS NOW STAND, MOST OF THOSE MEN WILL HAVE TO QUIT.

Title IX was not originally intended to work this way, and for the longest time, it didn't. The legislation was directly modeled on Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, adopting its language almost verbatim to effect a ban on gender exclusion or discrimination in any federally supported education program. At the time of its enactment, public-school and postsecondary sports appeared to be the programs most infected with bias. Fewer than 300,000 girls participated in high-school athletics in 1971, for example, along with more than 3.6 million boys.

How was Title IX supposed to redress this imbalance? Congress left its scope ambiguous. It was not clear that Title IX allowed the award of monetary damages in a private lawsuit. It was not clear what effective enforcement measures the federal government could take against non-complying schools short of withholding all federal aid. And it was not even clear whether Title IX applied to most school sports programs in the first place, since they receive only *indirect* federal aid.

So the executive branch was left to develop Title IX regulations on its own, flying blind. The first installment was finalized in 1975. It was complicated and confusing. There was a clarifying "policy interpretation" in 1979 that established a "three-prong test" of compliance. Schools could satisfy the law first by providing girls and women with varsity sports opportunities at rates "substantially proportionate" to their enrollment. Or, second, by demonstrating a "history and continuing practice" of expanded opportunities. Or, third, by fully accommodating the "abilities and interests" of female athletes.

There things stood for most of the next 15 years. The Office for Civil Rights at the Department of Education would occasionally jawbone an allegedly maleficent institution or local board into doing better by its young-lady jocks. And meanwhile, for reasons that seem *not* much related to Title IX at all, school-based sports opportunities for girls and women were dramatically expanding nationwide. By the 1994-95 school year, the gender gap in high-school athletics had closed from more than 12 to 1 to about 3 to 2.

But starting in the late 1980s, Congress and the courts began to mess everything up. The Civil Rights Restoration Act, enacted over President Reagan's veto in 1988, definitively extended Title IX coverage to any program—including sports—in any school that receives any federal aid. A February 1992 Supreme Court decision established a right to monetary dam-

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ages in private Title IX litigation. And the lower courts were then off to the races. A series of federal district court cases endorsed the discrimination claims of female college athletes whose schools had, for budgetary reasons, eliminated their sports—and ordered those programs restored.

In the process, these courts, upheld every time by the federal circuit courts, effectively knocked out two prongs of the old three-pronged test. The litigation itself was taken as evidence that the schools had failed Prong Three by not fully satisfying athletic demand. Prong Two was repeatedly interpreted to require *recent* sports program expansion for the "underrepresented sex"; girls teams added in the 1970s and 1980s didn't count. So the only defense a college or university had left was achievement of the Prong One benchmark, something close to a 50-50 gender allocation of varsity playing spots. Only nine schools in the National Collegiate Athletic Association's top sports division can now meet this test. The other 99 do not, and the situation is much the same in the lower divisions.

Title IX has become a quota. With few exceptions, no school in the United States may abandon an existing women's sports program for any reason. To remain on the happy side of the law, schools must get their numbers in ever-finer balance by adding women's programs, which few if any of them can afford to do, or eliminating their men's athletic programs. Which is what dozens of universities have been doing the past few years, prodded by Clinton administration Office for Civil Rights chief Norma Cantu. Cantu has exponentially increased her office's Title IX investigations. She has also issued a "clarification" of the three-prong test for consistency with the new, judicially enforced push for rigid parity.

Any college with a football program begins this mathematical exercise with about 100 "too many" male athletes. But football is a "revenue" sport in men's college athletics. And men's revenue pays for women's programs, which eat up far more cash than they earn. So most schools have cut football rosters rather than kill their teams outright (though several in the California state system have lately done that, too). Most schools have also been forced to deal much more brutally with their marginal, non-revenue men's sports.

Colgate has dropped baseball. Michigan State is dropping men's fencing and lacrosse. The University of New Hampshire will drop baseball, lacrosse, and golf. Innumerable colleges have dropped wrestling and men's gymnastics, both of which are approaching extinction on the national level. Ditto for men's swimming and diving, which has died even at UCLA, world famous for its Olympic medalists. Notre Dame, Iowa State, Penn State, Illinois, Illinois State, Cornell, SUNY/Albany, and others have all done something like this—the list is long and depressing. All told, since 1992, NCAA member schools have added more than 5,000 roster spots for female athletes. But at a cost of more than 20,000 lost spots for men.

No school is immune. The best-known case,

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Brown University, is also the most instructive. Brown is a very p.c. place. It fields female athletes at almost three times the national average. It offers 18 women's varsity sports, more than double the national average, and most of those teams have roster spots their coaches cannot find women to fill. But because Brown's male/female athletic ratio is still a bit out of whack, the federal courts have found it in violation of Title IX. This, despite the fact that Brown's own evidence—and all the equally unrebutted national evidence of modern social science—indicates that women don't participate in sports at the same rate as men for one reason more than any other: *They simply don't want to*.

Things can only get worse. Much worse. There are still about 80,000 more men than women playing intercollegiate varsity sports in the United States. Under current law, given the general financial circumstances of American higher education, most of those men will have to quit. It's inconceivable that the courts will save them any time soon. The Supreme Court has recently declined to hear a final appeal of the Brown University case. It will be at least a few years before some college or university manages to force the Supreme Court to rule on the matter—by first persuading a circuit court that Title IX has become an engine of unconstitutional reverse discrimination. By then, Title IX litigation will probably have oozed its threatening way into high-school athletics, where similar gender disparities remain.

Of course, Congress, now controlled by a nervous and gender-gap-obsessed Republican party, could always rewrite Title IX to make plain that all this is unnecessary, bad, and forbidden.

Fat chance of that. Hang up your jock straps, boys. The ball game's over.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Where's Al Gore?

by Tucker Carlson

New York

You probably don't hear a lot about global warming these days. But then, you probably don't live in the Republic of Maldives. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom does—he's the president of the Maldives, in fact—and last week at the second United Nations Earth Summit in New York, he explained what global warming means to him and to his island nation. If the planet continues to heat up at current rates, said Gayoom in a speech delivered in the U.N.'s General Assembly hall, the Maldives will become a modern Atlantis, "totally submerged" by the run-off from melting polar ice caps. By the time the U.N. holds its next environmental conference, Gayoom warned, his country may be but a soggy memory.

Faced with such a grim prognosis, an ordinary world leader might have been tempted simply to give up, accept the inevitable, and buy a glass-bottomed boat. Not Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. There is a solution to the looming crisis of global warming, Gayoom told the assembled delegates, a way not only to stem the rising tide of the earth's oceans and save the Maldives, but an opportunity to create in the process "a shared, a just, a prospering people's world." How can it be done? It won't be easy. The Maldives will need more "resource mobilization," additional "technology transfer," dramatically increased "capacity building for the promotion of sustainable development," not to mention a strong dose of "global cooperation." In other words, said President Gayoom, the Republic of Maldives is going to need a whole lot more foreign-aid money from the United States.

Gayoom's speech came at an odd time in the history of the global-warming debate. Five years after global warming became an international cause at the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, there is still no scientific consensus that the phenomenon even exists. Indeed, new data seem to show that parts of the planet (there is no "global" climate) are actually cooling off. Of the studies that support the rising temperature thesis, at least one credibly suggests that global warming will cause ocean levels to *drop*, through increased evaporation and snowfall over the poles. The Maldives might be safe after all.

But no matter. Global warming, real or not, is a potential cash cow for many Third World nations. Countries like Kiribati, Nauru, Vanuatu, Tuvalu, and Palau, none of them a major player on the world stage, are nonetheless signatories to the U.N. Convention on Climate Change. Participation in the Convention makes it possible for a poor nation to receive U.N. money to reduce carbon-dioxide emissions, while requiring it to do or pay virtually nothing in return. Meanwhile, countries like the United States and . . . well, mostly the United States, get to foot the bill.

It's not a bad deal if you're a backward, poverty-stricken country with an egregious pollution record—known in U.N. parlance as a "developing nation"—and throughout the summit, delegates from the Third

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World took to the podium to follow the Maldives Model. Robert Mugabe, the president of Zimbabwe, demanded "international cooperation" with his country, "particularly in the areas of trade, debt relief, provision of financial resources and technology transfer." Saifuddin Soz, the Indian minister of environment and forests, also called for more cash, while denouncing "efforts to prescribe equal obligations and liabilities on unequal players"—in other words, efforts to force India to pay its share of the bill. His Excellency Sir Cuthbert Sebastian, the head of state of St. Kitts and Nevis, requested immediate "contributions" from the "developed world." It went on like this, speaker after speaker, day after day, for a week, an unending shakedown conducted entirely in diplomatic euphemisms.

Only Cuba, one of the few countries with no hope of getting American aid, strayed from the drill. The president of the Cuban national assembly, Ricardo Alarcón, attacked "international cooperation" as "an empty phrase," a statement about as close to blasphemy as anyone at the summit dared get. Alarcón went on to blast the United States as single-handedly "responsible for the destruction of the environment," a country motivated by "insane selfishness" and "capitalist greed" that "accumulated its wealth by exploiting the Third World." After hours of listening to speakers wax rhapsodic about the "framework of common but differentiated responsibilities," of leafing through U.N. publications with titles like "Gender Equality and Water Resources Management: Five Years After Rio," a reporter found Alarcón's old-fashioned Communist diatribe surprisingly fresh, even revolutionary. (His fellow diplomats apparently did, too; they gave Alarcón a noticeably enthusiastic round of applause.)

The Earth Summit held few surprises, but one of them was Al Gore. Gore, who through his book *Earth in the Balance* and his role as head of the Senate delegation to Rio in 1992 did more than perhaps any other person to hype global warming, was almost invisible at the summit. After delivering a short, tepid speech on the first day of the conference, Gore went back to Washington and stayed quiet. At the end of the day, it was Tony Blair, not Gore, who came away sounding the most like the Gore of old. "I speak to you not just as the new British prime minister, but as a father," Blair said, looking misty. Later in his speech, Blair, in classic Gore fashion, observed that although "it takes less than an hour to fell a tree, it can take a lifetime to replace it."

Gore wasn't just missing in action at the Earth Summit. His low profile has extended to other environmental questions as well. During the recent debate over tighter air-quality standards, Gore offered not a single public word of encouragement to his former protégée, EPA administrator Carol Browner. Indeed, on at least two occasions, Gore's staff leaked word to reporters that the vice president's office was "furious" with Browner for not consulting with Gore before proposing such rigorous new standards. Gore's anger stretches credulity—he would have been aware of any new air-quality proposals long before they became public—but he clearly thinks he needs to distance himself from Browner. The air-pollution standards outraged a number of important Democratic interests, including

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unions and a number of big-city mayors, and Gore can't afford to seem too green.

Gore's sudden change of heart hasn't gone unnoticed by environmentalists. In a recent *New York Times* article, the heads of both the League of Conservation Voters and the Environmental Information Center implied that Gore has betrayed the cause for political reasons. It is a view that is certain to be articulated by former Gore allies more often in months to come. Gore is "cynically manipulating the environmental movement," says Pranay Gupte, editor of the *Earth Times*, which published a daily edition at the summit. "He's been seen to be the great ozone man, though I think people are now beginning to realize that with Gore there is less than meets the eye."

Tucker Carlson is a staff writer for THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

THE TAX MICE THAT ROARED

by Lawrence Lindsey

DEPUTY TREASURY SECRETARY Lawrence Summers recently asserted that greed was the primary motivating force among tax-cut advocates in the United States. But to really see people trying to keep more of their own money, Summers should take a few detours on his next trip to Europe. While greedy Americans may talk about tax reductions, their European cousins actively take matters into their own hands.

But they are not the European cousins you normally think of. For those interested in seeing the physical effects of contemporary bourgeois resistance to the power of the state, I suggest the following itinerary: Monaco, Andorra, Luxembourg. Call them the tax mice that roared.

While the continent is dominated by governments that believe they should be a more than equal partner in someone's paycheck, the city-state of Monaco survives with no personal income tax. The result is that with a total population of 30,000, it also has a workforce of 30,000.

This is quite a contrast with the rest of Europe where almost no one works: Double-digit unemployment, early retirement, and extended schooling combine to produce worker-to-population ratios of around 40 percent for much of Europe. For example, France (which surrounds Monaco) has 58 million people and 24.2 million in the labor force with more than 3 million unemployed.

Of course, many workers in Monaco reside in France. One catch: French citizens working in Monaco have to pay income tax to France, and France's 18 percent value-added tax applies (France takes half and leaves Monaco the rest). France was not interested in creating a shopper's paradise for millions of French citizens, but could tolerate a geographically limited worker's paradise for residents of other countries.

The only thing constraining Monaco's growth as a tax haven is its size. It is only two miles long and about one-half mile wide.

The roughly 65,000 inhabitants of Andorra live on land so steep that cows can't graze; they would fall over. To get there you must drive through France or Spain (no flat land for an airport) up roads that repeatedly switch back to allow the car to make the grade. Better be sure you gas up enough to get there. There isn't much in the way of customer services, or anything else, on the way.

Suddenly, at the border, a town rises above the hillside: no houses, just stores. The "city" of Andorra, near the Spanish side, is definitely top of the line, with representatives of every European fashion and jewelry firm on hand. A smaller version exists on the French border. Alcohol and cigarettes are plentiful for the masses. And gas stations! Somehow the Andorrans can truck petrol up all those winding roads and beat the Spanish and French prices enough to produce long lines at the pump. It helps that the Spanish and French governments levy a gas tax of nearly $4 per gallon. Americans who think switching to a VAT will end tax evasion should definitely pay a visit. Sales taxes can produce monuments to government excess just as easily as income taxes.

The duchy of Luxembourg is a vision of a quaint, largely pastoral Europe with wooded rolling hills. There is no real-estate shortage, as in Monaco or Andorra: The country has 13 times the population of Monaco living on over 800 times as much land. Why would such a pleasant political anomaly enjoy a per capita income 60 percent higher than the average for the European Union? The words "financial powerhouse" do not readily spring to mind for a country that does not even control its own money; the Belgian franc circulates freely within its borders.

Well, you see, Luxembourg is full of banks—some 220. An estimated $205 billion is deposited here, over $500,000 per capita. Most of the money is German and

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is there because the local authorities not only don't tax it, but aren't very cooperative with their much larger neighbor's tax-collectors. The ever-efficient Germans came in through the back door, auditing all electronic money transfers out of German banks. But you can't audit cash.

Promoting tax avoidance is close to being official national policy. Rumors are sweeping Luxembourg's competitors that its prime minister will suggest making the principality the official tax haven of Europe when Luxembourg takes over from Holland as president of the European Union. His case should appeal to any economic nationalist. Why should tax-haven services for Europe go to some non-European place like the Caribbean when they could be provided here at home in the heart of the continent? Unfortunately for Luxembourg's prime minister, most of his European counterparts still have a very parochial vision of economic nationalism when it comes to taxes.

Monaco, Andorra, and Luxembourg: If the rest of Europe were to follow the lead of these three tiny spots, in 20 years America would be fearing the rise of Europe, Inc. And a little principality shall lead them.

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Clinton Lays an Egg

by Walter Berns

During the latter years of a teaching career extending over more than four decades, I became accustomed to university students who could not spell or punctuate and did not know the rudiments of English grammar and syntax. "Supersede," I would write in the margin of many a term paper (and, before I became tired of doing so, I would add, "Super, from the Latin *super*, meaning above, and sede, from the Latin *sedere*, meaning to sit; hence, supersede, literally to sit on top of"), and "This is not a sentence," or "This is a dangling participle," or "The semi-colon belongs after the quotation mark," or "See Fowler's *Modern English Usage* on that/which." I'd like to think that I did some good, but when I suggested to a graduate student that she purchase—worse, that she study—Kate Turabian's *Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, she left in a huff and dropped the seminar.

Then, like everyone else who watches televised football games, I also became accustomed to announcers and "commentators" who (when a running back is tackled behind the line of scrimmage or a quarterback throws an interception) utter such barbarisms as "Between you and I he shouda went inside" and "He shouda took the loss." I mostly suffered in silence, but once I wrote what I thought was a friendly letter to an announcer who consistently said "fortuitous" when he meant "fortunate." I got no response.

Nor did I get a response from the Director of Communications, Chevrolet Motor Division, 30007 Van Dyke Avenue, Warren, Michigan 48090, when I wrote to complain of an egregious error of diction in a four-page ad that appeared in *Newsweek* (and, I assume, other magazines). On the first page of the ad, surrounded by photographs of smiling children and a dog with a frisbee in its mouth, appeared this text: "It can open a door by itself. Sing two songs at once. Sit up and lay down. Imagine that. A minivan that can do more tricks than your dog." I could imagine it, all right. A couple of years ago, after a huge thunderstorm, I heard a TV interviewer ask a man what he was doing when the tree fell on his house. "Were you just laying on that sofa?" "Actually," the man replied, "I was lying on it." Hallelujah, I said to myself; where there's life, there's hope. In fact, I probably said that aloud.

But now comes the president of the United States, the leader of the free world, the man who is going to take us into the 21st century, the man who, after saying, "Why do we need all this inventory, it's not doing any good just laying out there," went on to say to the country's mayors assembled in San Francisco, "When we've got every classroom and every library and every school in America connected to the Internet, and then when we learn to teach the parents of those children how to access the Internet so they can communicate regardless of their work schedules with their teachers—was my kid in school today—with the principals—what can I do to help—when we do that, we are going to revolutionize learning in this country."

Good idea, that; and he can begin the revolution by conjugating the two verbs lay and lie, writing 100 times on the nearest White House blackboard: lay, laid, laid; lie, lay, lain. He especially ought to know the difference between them.

Walter Berns is John M. Olin university professor emeritus at Georgetown University and an adjunct scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

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A More Gated Union

By John J. Dilulio Jr.

Earlier this month Americans heard good news about crime for the fifth consecutive year: The FBI reported that in 1996 crime dropped another 3 percent, including a 7 percent decrease in violent crime. Murder showed the greatest decline (11 percent). Even in America's juvenile street-gang capital, Los Angeles, homicides fell by 16 percent, dropping from 849 in 1995 to 709 in 1996.

Even so, the American people continue to identify crime as the main problem facing the country today. In a Yankelovich survey for CNN-*Time* magazine conducted in May, 14 percent of the respondents said so; the economy concerned only 3 percent. With consumer-price inflation under control and a jobless rate of 4.8 percent, the public's relative calm about the economy seems entirely reasonable. But then, given the FBI figures, isn't the public's continued concern about crime more reactionary than rational?

After all, consider what they have heard over the past year or so. The image of New York City as a blood-soaked menace has given way to hucksterish front-page good-news stories and editorials about the Big Apple's transformation into the "safest big city in America" thanks to more aggressive wall-to-wall policing of everyone from subway-turnstile jumpers to street gun dealers. Liberal criminologists who spent their careers arguing that neither more cops nor more prison cells could cut crime because poverty causes crime are chasing grants to explain the changes in New York, Houston, and other cities where poverty rates haven't dropped but policing tactics have changed and sentencing laws have been toughened. Even advocates of community-based crime-prevention strategies who couldn't get the time of day from anyone now go on television to recount how this or that crime-infested park, housing project, or neighborhood has become crime and drug free. Ding, dong, the witch of crime is dead.

Amid all the euphoria over the crime decline—much of it deserved—it is important to sound two notes of caution. First, the latest crime statistics undercount serious crime, ever more of which is committed by juveniles. Second, crime is being contained because private citizens have been getting away from city street thugs—getting away to secure buildings, gated communities, and low-density suburbs and investing in private security.

The FBI undercounts crimes reported to the police because it uses what is known as a "hierarchical counting method." According to the FBI's method, only the most serious offense in any given crime incident is recorded. For example, if a woman is raped and beaten black and blue by a man who then steals her car, only a rape is recorded. Or, if two cars and two houses are broken into, and police suspect the crimes were committed by the same perpetrator, only the single crime deemed the most serious offense committed during the four-crime spree is counted. The way local police count crimes can also be quirky. In 1995 Philadelphia police did not follow the FBI's hierarchical method, and burglaries and robberies "went up" by 15 percent over 1994. In 1996, however, the city followed the method and both categories of crime "fell."

And, of course, police can't count crimes that go unreported, as an estimated 65 percent of all crimes do. There is reason to believe that big-city public high schools are especially reluctant to report crime. In 1994, the New York City Board of Education released a report indicating that 5,000 violent incidents (gang fights, weapons offenses, rapes, acts of vandalism) had taken place in city schools during the latter half of 1993. But nearly 400 of the city's 1,100 schools, including many schools in high-crime neighborhoods, reported not a single violent incident. After being challenged on the numbers by then-chancellor Ramon C. Cortines, the board issued a revised report indicating that closer to 6,700 incidents had occurred, or 34 percent more violent acts than city school principals had initially allowed. Nationally, how many school-site crimes are kept off police blotters is anyone's guess.

The other major national crime barometer, the

Contributing editor John J. DiIulio Jr. last wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about preachers working with urban youths.*

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annual victimization survey conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, is a better source of information, but hardly definitive. The BJS survey measures both reported and unreported crimes. But it does not count crimes against children age 12 or younger, even though studies indicate that one in six rape victims is a child and over half of all violent crimes committed by state prisoners against children were against pre-teens. The survey also does not count crimes against adults in jails, public hospitals, or homeless shelters, settings where, on any given night, lots of crime victims cluster. And the survey does not count serial victimizations. For example, if an old woman in a high-crime neighborhood can't recall precisely how many times she was mugged or how often her apartment was vandalized, the survey counts just one crime.

BEYOND ANY DOUBT, THE DAILY SUPPLY OF POTENTIAL CRIME VICTIMS, YOUNG AND OLD, HAS BEEN SHRINKING.

Besides, however it's measured, crime, and in particular murder, is not down everywhere, and violence is not down significantly among juveniles. In 1996 FBI-recorded crime was up 2 percent in the South. From 1995 to 1996, murders rose in Washington, D.C. (361 to 397), Atlanta (184 to 196), Miami (110 to 124), and many other cities.

In New York, murders fell again last year (1,177 to 986). All told, reported crime in the Big Apple has fallen by nearly 40 percent since 1993, accounting for roughly a third of the drop in reported crime nationally. But over the same period the city has suffered a 17.5 percent *increase* in crimes committed by kids referred to family court, continuing a decade-long rise in juvenile robberies (up 155 percent), sex offenses (up 126 percent), and total felonies (up 119 percent).

What is going on here? How can crime be both going up and going down? The answer is to be found in what I call the "crime denominator."

Most serious debate about crime trends concerns the "crime numerator"—the daily supply of street criminals, juvenile and adult, who are not stopped by whatever means from finding victims.

But crime also has a "denominator"—the daily supply of potential crime victims, young and old, who are not protected by whatever means from being victimized. Beyond any reasonable academic or ideological doubt, the crime denominator has been *shrinking*. To put it another way: There are fewer potential victims of crime because the potential victims are making it more difficult for criminals to prey on them.

By 1992, for example, an estimated 32 million Americans, or 12 percent of the population, lived in common-interest developments (CIDs)—condos, co-ops, gated communities, elderly-only villages, and so on. Today as many as 50 million people are living in CIDs. In his award-winning 1994 book on the rise of such "privatopias," political scientist Evan McKenzie estimated that in 1964 there were fewer than 500 CIDs nationally. But the number rose to 150,000 by 1992 and could reach 225,000 by the year 2000. In California alone, an estimated 500,000 people lived in gated communities in 1996, and it is thought the numbers are growing rapidly. In parts of the Southwest, a third of all new homes are being built behind security walls. One poll found nearly two-thirds of all Americans would prefer to live in such secure settings.

A motivating reason for the ongoing flight from the cities to the CIDies is the CIDs' virtual guarantee of greater safety from crime: No criminals need apply, strangers are stopped before entering, and troublemakers are easily evicted. The depopulation of cities is a trend that has been accelerating throughout the postwar period. About half of all Americans now live in suburbs. Over a dozen states, including California, Florida, and Michigan, have suburban-majority populations. And it's not simply a matter of "white flight," either. Today about three-quarters of all blacks who live in major metropolitan regions do not live in central city districts.

In a recent paper on crime and urban flight, economists Steven D. Levitt of Harvard and Julie Berry Cullen of M.I.T. estimated that "each additional reported crime is associated with a one person decline in city residents," with the "migration decisions of high-income households and those with children . . . much more responsive to changes in crime than other households."

People who aspire to be ex-urbanites don't need regression equations to trust such findings. Philadelphia has lost a quarter of a million residents in the last quarter-century. A 1995 survey found that 43 percent of the city's residents wanted to move to the suburbs (only 38 percent wanted to stay in the city). Their number-one reason? To get away from crime. And who can blame them? The city, with only about 14 percent of the state's population, has had over 40 percent of its criminal violence. Some 54 percent of Philadelphia residents report that they or members of their families have been victims of a major crime.

If you don't go near the ocean, you won't drown in

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the ocean. Over the last two decades many middle- and upper-middle-class elderly Americans have moved "inland" by retiring to suburbs and CIDs. Partly as a result, between 1974 and 1990 the rate of violent crime against persons age 65 and older fell by an estimated 61 percent, and by the early 1990s rates for personal theft and household crime among the elderly hit all-time lows.

Even as reported crime has decreased over the last half-decade, sales of home-security systems have increased by about 10 percent a year. An estimated two-thirds of all "sworn officers" in this country are private security, not public police. An entire generation of big urban and suburban shopping malls has been designed or reconfigured by security experts. And even small-store owners have increasingly resorted to open surveillance of shopping areas and hired rent-a-cops.

Finally, a study released last year by John Lott of the University of Chicago claimed that the proliferation of right-to-carry gun laws over the period 1977 to 1992 had dramatically decreased rapes and murders in America. Two intellectual straight-shooters, Harvard's Levitt and Carnegie Mellon criminologist Daniel S. Nagin, are among the many experts who have challenged Lott's statistical model. This scholarly scrap is far from over, but nobody doubts that Americans, including more and more women, have become increasingly well armed, largely in response to anxieties about urban crime.

A privately gated, guarded, and gun-toting America may be a safer America, but there are at least three reasons to keep the champagne corked. First, the shrinking crime denominator may also be an indicator of shrinking civic compassion for the inner-city poor; Americans may simply be giving up on those of their fellow citizens left behind in parlous and frightening circumstances. The proliferation of privately governed communities validates some of Charles Murray's concerns about the rise of "custodial democracy." In various essays published over the last several years, Murray has warned that America could well become a "caste society" with "utter social separation" of the middle and upper classes from the lower classes and the poor. "I am trying to envision," he has written, "what happens when 10 or 20 percent of the population has enough income to bypass the social institutions it doesn't like in ways that only the top 1 percent used to be able to do." More and more Americans, he has warned, could come to view crime-ridden cities as disorderly, dangerous, and dysfunctional places for which they have no civic or moral responsibility.

Second, liberals who are quick to make arguments about fairness and equity when it comes to household income have been slow to make them when it comes to public safety. The urban poor can't get themselves away from crime the way the middle class does because they simply cannot afford it. And even when they try to make things better where they are, they find they lack the political and legal clout necessary to eject troublemakers from public-housing complexes, erect concrete barriers on city streets where drug-trafficking takes place, and keep their children from harm during the school day.

Jonetta Rose Barras offers a sobering account of this problem in the summer edition of the *American Enterprise* magazine. Barras tells the tale of Artensa Randolph, a wheelchair-bound black woman in her 70s who organized with other residents of her Chicago public-housing complex. They got the Chicago Public Housing Authority and local police to conduct random, unannounced drug and gun sweeps, hoping "to capture the perpetrators who were turning neighborhoods into hell holes and apartments into prisons." It worked—until the American Civil Liberties Union filed a class-action suit to stop the sweeps. Unable to contain the ACLU, Mrs. Randolph and her fellow residents are now begging the governor to send in the National Guard.

Finally, what does the proliferation of gated communities tell us about the people who have chosen the security of life behind iron barriers and high walls? What of the cold sweats they experience when they forget to switch on their alarms, the fear that makes them nervously check and re-check their car-door locks when driving through devastated neighborhoods, the spirit of siege that leads many of them to purchase and carry guns for the first time in their lives, and feel the only way to teach their children to guard themselves from harm is to scare them within an inch of their lives about what might happen to them out there?

> A PRIVATELY GATED, GUARDED, AND GUN-TOTING AMERICA MAY BE A SAFER AMERICA, BUT THAT'S NO REASON TO BREAK OUT THE CHAMPAGNE.

An America in which crime is partially conquered by millions of citizens' moving or locking themselves away from the rest of society while over 5 million criminals are in custody on any given day may be the best we can do for now, but it is hardly a state of affairs deserving of celebration. ♦

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John Glenn: The Partisan Stuff

By Andrew Ferguson

It is a curious way for an American hero to end a long career. But there it is: John Glenn—decorated veteran of World War II and Korea, first American astronaut to orbit the earth, and for 22 years a popular senator from Ohio—seems determined to spend his final days of public service obstructing the Senate's investigation into the most bizarre, and perhaps most serious, national security scandal since Iran-contra.

Glenn, set to retire at the end of his term next year, is the ranking minority member of the Governmental Affairs Committee. Under its chairman, Sen. Fred Thompson, the committee is the appointed venue for investigating and ventilating the fund-raising abuses of the 1996 presidential campaign—preeminently the allegations of foreign influence and breaches of national security in exchange for political payoffs. Convened at the beginning of the year, the investigation has quickly disintegrated into partisan disputes, with charges of foot-dragging, obstruction, favoritism, and bad faith tossed about in press conferences and rancorous public meetings. Glenn and Thompson themselves are barely on speaking terms. Under Democratic pressure, the committee was given a deadline of December 31 to issue its report—a deadline that appears increasingly unworkable given the partisan delays. Once slated to begin in March, official hearings will now open on July 8.

For politicos with fond memories of whiling away hot Washington summers absorbed in titillating spectacles like the Iran-contra and Watergate hearings, nothing could be more frustrating than the possibility that the Thompson committee will put on a second-rate show. But that's now more than likely. In accounting for this disappointing turn, Dean David Broder of the *Washington Post* issued a recent bull that placed blame equally on Thompson and Glenn. "Two proud, stubborn men," Broder wrote in a column June 22, "they are on the verge of blowing it."

Broder's equivalence has the virtue of symmetry but the weakness of being not exactly true. If the Thompson investigation fails in its "duty to sort out truth from exaggeration," as Broder put it, blame should be placed squarely on Glenn and the Democratic subordinates he has failed to control.

The rancor arose early on. In setting up the investigation, Republicans banked on Glenn's reputation for rectitude; surely the astronaut that Tom Wolfe described, in *The Right Stuff*, as "serious about God, country, home and hearth" would likewise be serious about influence-peddling among Indonesian thugs, Chinese Communists, and American political operatives, even if the political operatives were Democrats. Thompson took as his model the close relationship established in past major investigations—between, most famously, Republican Howard Baker and chairman Sam Ervin in the Watergate hearings, and, more recently, Warren Rudman and Dan Inouye in Iran-contra. (Thompson was Baker's counsel during Watergate.) In both partnerships the ranking minority members—Republicans—pursued the charges without regard to the possible damage to their party.

Glenn apparently had other ideas. As soon as Thompson's committee was chosen as the venue for the investigation in early January, Glenn and the Democrats set potentially crippling conditions on the hearings. First they demanded that the investigation's budget be capped at $1.8 million—a figure they said was comparable to the Senate's Whitewater probe. But the amount was unrealistic on its face. By the time the Whitewater committee began its work, Republicans pointed out, many of the facts had already been gathered by government agencies. Republicans insisted, further, that the travel entailed in the Thompson committee's foreign investigation would require a far larger budget than that needed for a few months in Little Rock.

But Democrats held firm and followed up with a demand that the committee set a strict termination date for the end of this year. Thompson argued that a date certain would only invite dilatory tactics from the investigation's targets: avoidance of subpoenas, delay in producing documents, and so on. His fear was well-grounded. The White House, true to form, has produced requested documents in "dribs and drabs" (Thompson's phrase) and in heavily redacted form.

Senior editor Andrew Ferguson's cover story on John Kasich appeared three weeks ago.

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Meanwhile, several of the most sensational witnesses, including the Democratic fund-raisers Charlie Trie and Pauline Kanchanalak, have fled the country.

Finally, Democrats insisted that the scope of the investigation be broadened to include a probe of "soft money" expenditures—that is, campaign funds raised for "party-building activities" by both parties. This would have the effect of entangling several Republican-allied organizations in the committee's investigation—as well as obscuring the fact that the investigation was begun in response to news reports of potentially *criminal* foreign contributions to Democrats.

The wrangling over these and other issues dragged on into March, as the hoped-for date for hearings was continually pushed deeper into the calendar. At last Republicans struck a Republican-style compromise, which is to say they mostly gave in. The committee's budget was set at $4.3 million rather than the $6 million Thompson originally requested, and the investigation's broadened scope and termination date were agreed to. The investigation would now proceed in two phases, the first devoted to foreign money and national security violations, the second to "soft money" abuses. By the time both sides reached agreement, however, crucial months had been lost and the investigation had yet to formally begin.

But the delaying tactics continued. In April, for example, committee Republicans sought to issue a subpoena for bank records from the Bank of China, where Trie and other scandal figures had accounts. Committee Democrats refused to agree to the subpoena request until after the spring recess, causing a delay of two weeks for a subpoena that could have been approved in two days. And the tactics expanded outward from Capitol Hill: Committee investigators planned a June trip to Asia but complained that the State Department refused to give routine assistance in setting up interviews of potential witnesses abroad. Finally Thompson asked Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to intervene, and some assistance was offered. But Glenn asked Thompson to cancel the trip anyway—too few interviews had been arranged to warrant the expense, he said.

Much of this tactical maneuvering took place behind the scenes. It went undeniably public on June 12, when the committee voted on granting immunity to 15 Buddhist monks and nuns involved in Al Gore's famous fund-raiser at a Buddhist temple in 1996. News accounts suggest the Buddhists were used as conduits for money-laundering. The Justice Department had assured the committee's Republican counsel that the nuns and monks were not targets of prosecution and so could testify with impunity. On the morning of the vote, however, the committee's Democratic counsel, Alan Baron, phoned the Justice Department, which quickly reversed its position. A two-thirds majority is required to grant immunity, but the Democrats voted along party lines against allowing the Buddhists to testify.

For Republicans, Baron has become a symbol of the partisan duels. The original Democratic counsel, a veteran Capitol Hill lawyer named Mike Davidson, was effectively fired not long after the probe began. He had proved "insufficiently confrontational," in the words of one Democrat, and was replaced by Baron, who seems more than sufficiently confrontational. In this he is assisted by Glenn's chief aide, Leonard Weiss, and, curiously, by an aide to Senate majority leader Tom Daschle named Glenn Ivey. Ivey has no formal role on the committee, but he can be seen at its public meetings passing notes to staff, whispering in senators' ears, and keeping a close eye on every development. Once a staffer for the left-wing congressman John Conyers, Ivey performed similar duties for Daschle on the Whitewater investigation—which also, coincidentally, threatened to collapse in party-line bitterness.

> ONLY GLENN HAS THE AUTHORITY TO REIN IN HIS PARTY'S DILATORY MANEUVERS. HE HAS SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO DO SO.

Ivey's presence confirms the Democratic leadership's intense interest in the investigation—a controlling interest, Republicans allege. Ivey was instrumental in the obstinate negotiations over the investigation's scope and schedule. And Republicans, always warmed by notions of elaborate conspiracies, see behind the Democratic leadership the firm hand of the White House. They're almost certainly correct. Accounts published in the *Post*, *Roll Call*, *Vanity Fair*, and elsewhere say that deputy chief of staff John Podesta convenes a group in the White House each morning to monitor the investigation. Their wishes are conveyed to Daschle and, through Ivey, to Glenn and the committee. Sometimes communication is even more direct. Daschle himself has received late-night phone calls from President Clinton complaining that Hill Democrats have too readily accommodated Republicans on the scandals.

Only Glenn, as ranking member, has the authority to rein in his party's dilatory maneuvers. He has shown no inclination to do so. At a recent press con-

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ference he stood by as his colleague Robert Torricelli attacked Thompson's "personal integrity"—an unusual charge, since personal integrity has not previously been considered Torricelli's area of expertise. When a reporter from *Roll Call* asked how the investigation could proceed when so many witnesses were either on the lam or, like the infamous John Huang, invoking the Fifth Amendment, Glenn replied, "That's their problem." Meaning Republicans.

One would think it was the *committee's* problem, given that the committee as a whole, and not just its Republican majority, is charged with exposing the scandal. Glenn's partisan obstructionism may jar those who know him only as the ticker-tape hero of the early 1960s, but it's less surprising to those familiar with his political career.

Glenn plausibly ran as a moderate in the 1984 Democratic presidential primaries—and got trounced in the party of Walter Mondale—but he has moved steadily leftward since his election to the Senate in 1974. His partisanship has always been reliable when needed. And more personal considerations may be entering in as well. Glenn still carries a large debt from the '84 campaign of at least $3 million that he has been unable to pay down. To finally retire it will require the aid of the White House and the Democratic National Committee, two entities most vulnerable to an unfettered investigation. Moreover, friends say, Glenn has been "offended" by Thompson's lack of deference toward him—a charge that mystifies Thompson. But heroes can be touchy.

Whatever its motivation, Glenn's obstructionism is sound strategy. The House of Representatives is undertaking its own fund-raising investigation, and of the two, Thompson's is by far the more potentially credible and hence threatening to Democrats. The House probe is led by Dan Burton, a volatile ideologue from Indiana who may have fund-raising troubles of his own and who, perhaps more important, will prove less presentable to a national television audience. Thompson, by contrast, is a senator from central casting—almost literally, since much of his pre-senatorial career was given over to acting in such deathless Hollywood shoot-'em-ups as *Die Hard 2*. Six-foot-six, deep-voiced, and handsome in a well-worn sort of way, he exudes a no-nonsense, and highly telegenic, air of authority.

But first he needs a script, a compelling story to tell, and it is this possibility that Glenn, as a shill for the White House and his leadership, apparently means to forestall at all costs. And the costs could be heavy—not least to Glenn's popular reputation as a great American hero, willing to put the public interest above political calculation. ♦

The EPA's Hot Air

By Michael Fumento

Okay, let's be fair. Punctilious honesty has not been the Clinton administration's strong suit. But every bell curve has its extremes—its outliers, as it were. The word "outlier" brings to mind Environmental Protection Agency administrator Carol Browner and her new air-pollution standards.

These proposals, to be enforced under the Clean Air Act, would increase burdens on automobiles, factories, and utilities that could range from installing filters to using different fuels to ceasing operations altogether.

One type of pollution targeted by the new standards is particles in the air. Particulate matter (PM) can be solid or liquid, emitted directly or formed in the atmosphere when gaseous pollutants (called "precursors") interact. One common way of categorizing particulate matter is by size. "PM10" includes particles up to 10 microns wide—about a hundredth the width of a human hair.

Currently, EPA regulates only PM10, while the new standards would also regulate "fine particles," 2.5 microns wide or less. Most PM2.5 comes from sulfur dioxide (produced by power plants and manufacturing plants) and nitrogen oxide (from power plants, manufacturing plants, and vehicles), combined with oxygen.

The second type of pollution EPA seeks to further regulate is ground-level ozone, or "photochemical smog." This is formed when two precursor gases,

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volatile organic compounds (mostly from vehicles, but also from freshly applied paints and solvents, backyard barbecues, and industrial processes such as baking bread and dry cleaning) and nitrogen oxide, mix and are "cooked" by sunlight.

Those are the facts upon which all can agree. Then the truth gets wrapped up in a demagogic fog. For every fib Browner tells, there is at least one fact that belies her.

FIB: Browner is not only on the side of the angels, she says; she is also on the side of solid science. As she said at a November 27, 1996, press conference, on air pollution, "the scientific findings are clear."

FACT: One scientist recently summed up the situation as to particulates this way: "Current data do not support clear associations of [premature mortality] effects with either fine particles (PM2.5), inhalable particles PM10 or PM15." She is Rosina Bierbaum, assistant director for the environment at the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

FIB: Browner has said over and over, including in testimony before Congress in February, that the EPA's Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee reviewed "86 studies . . . indicating that our current air standards are not adequately protecting the public's health."

FACT: Regarding ozone, the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee said there was no scientific basis for choosing a new standard; they called it a "policy judgment." As to particulates, only six of the 21 committee members agreed with EPA's proposed 24-hour and annual standards for PM2.5. Only four members said the allowable level of PM2.5 should be set as low as EPA wanted. In a June 1996 letter to Browner, the committee said EPA's "deadlines did not allow adequate time to analyze, integrate, interpret, and debate the available data." But, added George Wolff, the chairman of the committee: "There does not appear to be any compelling reason to set a restrictive PM2.5 [standard] at this time."

Michael Ramirez

Carol Browner

FIB: Browner speaks of the "consistency and coherence" of the studies on particulates.

FACT: Three men, who receive lots of EPA funding, do consistently find that particulates are unhealthy. One formerly worked for the agency, and he and another member of this "Particle-Hunter Triumvirate" were advisers to a 1996 report by the Natural Resources Defense Council (the folks who brought us the Alar scare) claiming that an amazing 64,000 Americans are killed each year by air pollution. Other researchers seem consistently unable to find these same effects—notably in their research on Salt Lake County, Birmingham, Philadelphia, Detroit, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Steubenville.

For all of Browner's talk of 86 studies, "The database for actual levels of PM2.5 is also very poor, and only a handful of studies have actually studied PM2.5 effects, per se," notes Bierbaum. Even with the help of one of the Particle-Hunter Triumvirate members, Harvard researcher Douglas Dockery, I was able to locate only 13 studies of PM2.5 specifically. Four looked for associations with premature deaths. Of these, two found statistically significant associations with particle increases and two did not.

Nine studies looked for associations between fine particles and non-fatal illness. Of these, four showed *no* association with *any* of the symptoms. Five showed a statistically significant association with some of the symptoms measured, but these symptoms showed up in some studies and not others.

FIB: In her February 12 testimony before the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Browner presented a poster entitled "Soot/Particulate Matter: The Science Calls for Action." It summarized five of the 13 PM2.5 studies.

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FACT: Even of these five, only one clearly supports the "adverse health effect" Browner's poster claimed. Another comprised results from six cities, only three of which had statistically significant associations between PM2.5 and harm. The three with harmful associations were on the chart, while the three that showed no injury from fine particles were left off.

FIB: Far from costing us money, the particulate-matter regulations will generate health-cost savings that amount to a tremendous windfall.

FACT: To achieve the alleged savings, the EPA refrains from performing a full cost-benefit analysis. But the act of removing pollution from the air increases in cost as the air gets cleaner: Each ton of pollutant is more expensive to remove or prevent than the previous ton, and each ton removed or prevented has less effect on health. It might cost $10 million to save the first ten lives from some danger—and $100 million to save ten more lives. Thus, by using only a partial analysis, the EPA disguises the real costs.

It also assigns a value of *$4.8 million* to each premature death prevented, even though the potential victims are people in poor health with a life expectancy of one to two years. By contrast, the Department of Transportation assigns a value of $2.7 million to deaths, although these are accidental deaths of healthy people with a life expectancy of 38 more years.

FIB: When it comes to ozone, the benefits from tighter standards won't save us much in health costs, but they won't cost much either.

FACT: To reach its estimate that the cost of implementing the new regulations will be between $600 million and $2.5 billion, EPA assumes that compliance will not be complete. The president's Council of Economic Advisers, however, did a "full attainment" estimate and placed the costs as high as $60 billion. The Reason Public Policy Institute reached a similar figure, while George Mason's Center for the Study of Public Choice put it somewhere between $54 billion and $328 billion. On the benefit side, EPA makes assumptions that defy credulity. While the Council of Economic Advisers values the benefits at practically nothing, the EPA values the prevention of a single case of non-fatal bronchitis at a stunning $587,500.

FIB: Browner claims the new standards will save 15,000 lives and prevent 500,000 respiratory problems annually.

FACT: Economists have long accepted that "wealth equals health." Wealthier people can afford better health care, better hygiene, and safer occupations. By diverting wealth, regulation suppresses health. W. Kip Viscusi of Harvard calculates that "every $50 million spent on regulation induces one statistical death." Depending on whose estimate of the cost of EPA's new regulations is used, they could actually cause tens of thousands of such deaths every year.

FIB: The clean-air standards are "not about outdoor barbecues and lawn mowers," says Browner, dodging charges that Americans could be forced to change their lifestyles. When industry spokesmen bring up these issues, Browner smears their claims as "junk science" and "scare tactics" that are "fake," "wrong," and "manipulative." The environmentalists back her up. Talk about barbecues and lawnmowers is "crazed propaganda," says Frank O'Donnell, executive director of the Clean Air Trust.

DESPITE BROWNER'S DENIALS, THE EPA BY 1994 ALREADY HAD PLANS TO REGULATE LAWN MOWERS AND OTHER SMALL ENGINES.

FACT: In 1994, EPA already had plans to regulate lawn mowers. "The small gasoline engines that Americans use in yard and garden work are a significant source of air pollution," Browner said that year. In 1996, EPA promulgated emissions standards for lawn mowers. A Pentagon document noted that to comply with "the current ozone standards, EPA proposed [restricting the use of] even lawnmowers and other small engines."

One state, California, already regulates barbecue grills, leaf blowers, and paint. Denver severely restricts the use of wood-burning fireplaces and has outlawed them in new homes. Regulators in San Francisco have urged residents to refrain from using aerosol deodorants and alcohol-based perfumes to reduce ozone-creating gases.

FIB: Asked at the June 26 press conference, "Do you have estimates for how many counties will fall out of compliance?" Browner pleaded ignorance on this sensitive issue. "We don't at this time. We are still looking at that," she said.

FACT: The EPA staff paper on particulates states that counties not complying with the fine-particle regulation will quadruple from 41 to 167. The staff paper on ozone says that the non-complying counties will more than triple in number. (Outside evaluators say the EPA numbers are too low.) You can even go to EPA's Web site and see whether your county is a potential offender.

FIB: Taking her cue from her boss, who plays the

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"child card" at every opportunity, Browner invokes children as major beneficiaries of the new proposals. "When it comes to protecting our kids," she intoned at a recent press conference, "I will not be swayed."

FACT: According to EPA's own staff papers, to the extent there are premature deaths from air pollution they will be among "vulnerable individuals, primarily the elderly and individuals with preexisting respiratory disease." Even the National Resources Defense Council admitted in its 1996 report, "The elderly and those with heart and lung disease are at greatest risk of premature mortality due to particulate air pollution."

FIB: Rising rates of asthma are caused by air pollution. Top White House environmental official Kathleen McGinty told reporters at the June 26 press conference that smog "seriously exacerbate[s] asthma conditions and other lung ailments, and that particularly affect[s] children. Asthma is on the rise throughout the United States."

FACT: Asthma is indeed rising sharply among children—even as pollution is dropping. All six of the major air pollutants EPA monitors have declined over the last decade, including ozone and PM10. Two researchers recently wrote in *Science* magazine that these "suggest that asthma prevalence has increased because of something lacking in the urban environment, rather than through the positive actions of some toxic factor." Then in May, researchers reported that the major cause of asthma in inner cities (where rates are by far the highest) is neither cars nor corporations but cockroaches.

"It's a cruel hoax to lead parents to believe their children will be protected from having asthma if only the EPA clamps down on outdoor air pollution," says Robert Phalen, a biomedical scientist who for 22 years has directed the Air Pollution Health Effects Laboratory at the University of California in Irvine.

Indeed, Phalen believes EPA's whole new regulatory scheme is a cruel hoax. And if it's the child card you want to play, consider: The new regulations won't kick in until the next century, with costs then steadily rising. Long after Carol Browner and Bill Clinton have settled into retirement, who do you think is going to pay the price for their prevarications? ♦

Hong Kong and Britain, Two Islands at Sea

By Malcolm Bradbury

Hong Kong and its Fragrant Harbor are, everyone agrees, among the loveliest sights on earth. The British Royal Navy undoubtedly thought so when it seized the 35 miles of rock from China in 1841 and, almost secretly, added it to the great pink map of Empire. Early governors developed the territory even as London contemplated giving it back someday. There were pirates in Kowloon, endemic fevers in the Happy Valley, opium warehouses and sailors' brothels by the harbor. But the imperial fathers took care to build hospitals, a racetrack, and the still-elegant Government House.

The Treaty of Nanking—which the Chinese still call the "Unequal Treaty" and consider an eternal humiliation—was signed amid the Opium Wars in 1842. Soon British judges sat in British courts, British doctors relieved the fevers, British enterprises flourished, and British administrators ruled the roost. British statues rose in the parks, British clubs and societies prospered, and British two-decker trams rattled through noisy, cramped Chinese thoroughfares. In the British imagination, Hong Kong became an unashamed success of empire—a thriving entrepôt, a meeting-place of East-West culture, a happy harbor on the Asian shore.

More than a century and a half on, Hong Kong still looks good. Summer mists come up from the network of peaks and islands. Huge container ships just like horizontal buildings edge through the junks and sampans and under the splendid new bridge to the new airport. On the waterfront, elegant high-rise

Malcolm Bradbury, an English novelist and scholar, last wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about Virginia Woolf.*

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financial buildings rise shinily, like ever-improving statistics, which is mostly what they are. The grand names of world architecture have done some of their finest work here. Norman Foster built the elegant Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, and I.M. Pei the slant-roofed Bank of China, a handy spy-post for Chinese surveillance.

Hong Kong flourished, but it flourished best when its day seemed just about done—after the Cultural Revolution. Mao threatened to reclaim the crown colony, "when the time was right." But its effectiveness as a trading post into and out of China doubtless helped preserve it, as did the American navy, the growing strength of the Hong Kong dollar, and the surging energies of the "overseas" Chinese. Mao's revolution really invented turbo-charged, sweatshop, manufacturing, high-spending, glittering modern Hong Kong. In his years, it became an ideal example of an NIC (Newly Industrialized Country) on the Pacific rim, eventually developing into the world's largest container port, the eighth greatest commercial power, "the most international city in the world."

HONG KONG FLOURISHED, BUT IT FLOURISHED BEST WHEN ITS DAY SEEMED JUST ABOUT DONE—AFTER THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION.

In December 1984, after much troubled triangular diplomacy, came the Joint Declaration, signed by Deng Xiaoping and Margaret Thatcher with much ceremony in the Great Hall of the People. There was a sense of general euphoria, deriving from Deng's new openness, his encouragement of the overseas Chinese to reinvest back home, and, above all, his post-Marxist faith that "to get rich is good." In 1989, the events in Tiananmen Square deeply soured that understanding. But so did British moves to offer more political democracy before the handover occurred.

Hong Kong, home to 6 million people, including 80,000 white expatriates and persons of myriad other citizenships, secured its position by ingenuity, cunning, and the manipulation of far greater powers than it could ever possess by itself. The British trace is obviously strong, but many of the great businesses are international, owned by Americans, Australians, a multiplicity of Pacific tycoons, and increasingly by China itself. Some are moving out, others moving in. The stock market continues to surge. Emigration increases at speed, but the *gweilo* expatriates ("white ghosts") keep coming in.

All this changes at midnight on June 30. The British flag at Government House will be furled for the last time (no doubt to the strains of "The Last Post"). The Chinese flag will rise (no doubt to the strains of "The East Is Red"). Tony Blair, the new British prime minister, will be there, along with Robin Cook, his foreign secretary. So will Mrs. Thatcher and the Prince of Wales (but not the late Deng, who said the handover was the last thing he wished to see before he joined his ancestors). The Three Tenors may sing, and David Copperfield will do his magic tricks. Mechanical flying dragons are expected to zoom in from China, along with troops from the Chinese People's Army. (As the Chinese Preparatory Committee has already announced, "The real celebration will take place after the British have left. Not too many people care whether the Handover Ceremony is big or small. What they want is entertainment.")

Then the last few British troops will leave, and the British royal party will depart quickly, on the reassuring royal yacht *Britannia*—which, alas and maybe symbolically, is itself destined for the scrapyard as soon as it comes home. It will be coming home to *another* offshore island that risks becoming ever more offshore, even as Hong Kong itself joins with the mainland. It will (save for an island or dependency or two) be a post-imperial Britain, going through a change of history and a crisis of identity—all pleasantly masked by the election of a new government that has succeeded in invigorating and capitalizing on millenarian expectations and generational hopes for change.

The Blair administration has come to office with the authority of a large majority and all the confidence of a government-in-waiting. It has hit the ground running. Its honeymoon period—occasioned less by its own policies than a deep-seated national disillusionment with the last administration, which in some quarters amounts to a kind of vengeance—will last for quite a while yet. Still, one of its first major encounters with world history will come with the handover of Hong Kong. The Blair government will have every reason to hope that the handover goes well and helps set the seal on a post-imperial, yet buoyant, new Britain. It will no doubt hope to see old imperial attitudes slip away and a new post-colonial culture prosper.

Chinese diplomacy, based on the rise of its own dragon empire and the decline of the paper-tiger British one, has been traditionally cunning. It has

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essentially been to divide the British interest, which was anyway split from the very start (Lord Palmerston in 1841 wondered about the point of acquiring "a barren island with hardly a house upon it"). The old China hands of the Foreign Office have always—understandably—regarded Beijing as far, far more important than Hong Kong, 1.2 billion more crucial than 6 million. China has skillfully returned the compliment, often succeeding in isolating successive Hong Kong governors from the diplomatic process.

In recent years, Beijing has upped the ante, even threatening to exclude the present governor, Chris Patten, from the handover ceremony. (Patten is regularly reviled as "Fat Pang" and "Tango Dancer" for his flirtation with democracy.) They have had a good deal of British support in their critical strategy. In recent months and weeks, a number of influential voices in Britain have been distancing themselves from Patten's democratization strategy as the countdown clock in Tiananmen Square moves toward zero.

Leading figures—including several former British ambassadors to Beijing, most notably the influential Sir Percy Cradock, who helped mastermind the Joint Declaration—have made one thing clear: The important axis is ever London-Beijing. Former Tory prime minister Edward Heath has long been a bitter critic of the chief voice of Hong Kong democracy, Martin Lee. Sir Geoffrey Howe, the former Conservative foreign secretary, has described the Joint Declaration as a "Ming vase" that has to be handled very carefully. Mrs. Thatcher, as co-signatory, is at once protective of the British heritage in Hong Kong and committed to the effectiveness and solidity of the treaty. And, of course, the Chinese millionaires and billionaires who are, in a sense, the spirit of postmodern Hong Kong have already constructed their own new alliances, economic and political, with the Communist government.

The handover itself will pass in a surge of party sound. The great problem is, What comes next? One large difficulty for Robin Cook is that he has already committed British foreign policy to a highly moral agenda. Even so, he has backed President Clinton's decision to renew China's MFN status, saying it would help secure the future of Hong Kong's people (even as he has solicited firm American support for the protection of their civil liberties).

The fact is, of course, that the future of Hong Kong depends entirely on the future policies of a China that has still not really established its own political direction in the wake of Deng's death. Internal problems and possibilities, risks of new ideological doctrines and divisions in China, will over time determine how safe the delicate "Ming vase" of the Joint Declaration is—and to what degree capitalistic Hong Kong will continue to prosper. Surrounded by Special Development Zones and experiencing extraordinary internal growth, Hong Kong will very probably fade into status as one of many boom cities, cut loose from the poorer, populous countryside. Its most successful entrepreneurs—many of them with close contacts in Beijing and Shanghai—will invest more widely and function more nationally. Many may leave the Fragrant Harbor altogether.

One of the most interesting stories of the next weeks, months, and years, therefore, is the story of the future of the two offshore islands. One is returning to the motherland after a distinctive, internationalized history; the other is slipping its old imperial moorings and trying to shape its international policy in a time of decisive change. For as Hong Kong unites, Britain continues with the long-lived process of finding an effective post-imperial identity—a problem for the last 50 years, in which innumerable successive policies have been tried, from an Atlantic Alliance to a major role in an alternative, non-federalist Europe.

End-of-century, post-Cold War, New Labour Britain is already seeing fresh internal forces of division: devolution in Scotland, Wales, and perhaps Ireland, as well as changed, and probably improved, relations with Europe—which imply a further loss of nation-state sovereignty. It is not only for Hong Kong and everything that has been invested there that the new day that dawns on July 1 is important. Britain too will be a different place, its long imperial history gone, its mental maps for the future taking on different contours.

> IT IS NOT ONLY FOR HONG KONG THAT A NEW DAY DAWNS. BRITAIN TOO WILL BE A DIFFERENT PLACE AFTER THE HANDOVER.

If, once the press corps has departed and the full reality of Chinese possession takes over, things do go reasonably right in Hong Kong, then, in the euphoria of their own political and indeed millennial change, the post-imperial British will probably be able to adjust to their changing (and they hope not diminishing) role. But if the many fearful people are correct, things do go badly wrong, and the new order proves oppressive or simply too corrupt, old responsibilities will not have disappeared. The Empire will still feel them, and so be judged. ♦

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French Lessons

19th-century France Is Closer Than You Think

By David Frum

A Victorian Englishman went to his local library looking for a copy of the French Constitution; "I'm sorry sir," the librarian replied, "but we don't carry periodical literature." A creaky joke, but the British had reason to laugh. In the century after the 1789 revolution, France adopted a dozen new constitutions: in 1790, 1792, 1793 (never put into effect), 1795, 1799, 1804, 1814, 1815 (also never put into effect), 1830, 1848, 1852, and 1875.

And it wasn't as if the French behaved themselves in between overthrowing regimes. The monarchy of King Louis Philippe lasted 18 years, from 1830 to 1848, but it was punctuated by two important Paris insurrections—one in 1832 and another in 1834—and eight assassination attempts on the monarch. Napoleon III ruled for 19 years, and survived six assaults, one of which killed eight and wounded 150. Before the Third Republic could establish itself after the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, it ferociously crushed a dissident "Commune" government organized by Paris radicals. Altogether, 60,000 or more Frenchmen perished in internecine fighting between 1814 and 1871.

The English-speaking countries have never known anything like this sort of turmoil.The last break in the continuity of British government came in 1688. And while American history has certainly been stained with violence, the United States too has seldom gone in for radical legal or constitutional upheavals: Only in 1865, and then only in part of the country, have Americans ever suffered anything like the total collapse in state authority that the French have lived through once or twice in every generation.

The French seem in recent years to have grown embarrassed by their bloody history. Back in 1950, the revolutions and counterrevolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries could still be romanticized; these were bourgeois revolts that gave way to premature proletarian uprisings, and were then followed by temporarily successful but ultimately futile attempts to reimpose a bourgeois order. Without Marxism to infuse world-historical meaning into slaughter, all too many French writers prefer to avert their eyes from the disorder in the city streets and study instead the changeless rhythms of life in the countryside.

Robert Tombs
France
1814-1914
Longman, 592 pp., $29.75 (paperback)

But if the French revolutions of the 19th century have less to say to the French of today than they once did, perhaps they have more to say to those of us in the English-speaking world. It may be that the question that has long interested English-speaking historians of France—Why have our societies been so stable when theirs has not?—should now begin to give way to a new, less flattering question: What does the instability in France's past tell us about the instability that may lie in our future?

Robert Tombs, a professor of history at Cambridge University, puts the problem of instability at the very top of his list of concerns in his new account of 19th-century France. In 1789, the French had discovered that it was possible for a society to capsize itself, shatter its old institutions, and invent entirely new institutions, removing its old elites and creating new ones. Tombs observes that "the sudden violent remaking of society was a new concept of politics. It upset old certainties, reversed relationships of power and intruded into every aspect of life." The French were not able to recover their balance for decades afterward. The French mistrusted one another; so fantastically mistrusted one another that they were capable of believing even the most lurid horror stories about their internecine enemies. "Conspiracy theories," Tombs writes, "perpetuated 'the language of civil war' in politics. They portrayed not a society pluralistically divided by legitimate beliefs and interests, but a 'binary divide' between a united, patriotic and wholly legitimate 'us,' and a diverse unholy alliance of traitors and criminals—'them.' The struggle was dramatized into a historic battle for the soul of France and the future of the world."

The sharpest line dividing the French from one another was the society's furious disagreement over the role of religion. As the century progressed, the conflict intensified. By the 1880s, "instead of at least

Contributing editor David Frum last wrote for THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about the Canadian elections.*

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paying lip service to Catholic ethical and spiritual values as the foundation of morality in society, representatives of the republican State condemned them for undermining the ethical standards of a modern democratic nation. . . . All their educational aims—the promotion of scientific rationalism, of national unity, of progressive political attitudes, of a new rational morality, of individual self-reliance—they saw as blocked or undermined by Catholic education, which, they believed, made children superstitious, submissive, hypocritical and unpatriotic."

The religious schism in French society divided the country geographically as well as by faith. "What has principally determined the beliefs and political loyalties of French people since the Revolution has been the part of the country where they lived," Tombs says, with radicalism strongest in the center and south of the country, with Catholicism strongest in the west and southwest, and with militant nationalism strongest in the east and north.

This all sounds abundantly familiar. America too is increasingly divided along religious lines. As in late 19th-century France, the animosity comes to a head most vividly in the classroom, with the state ever more determined to use its schools to form a citizen free from what educators see as the prejudices of the past, and with religious communities truculently determined to resist. The different factions in American life likewise seem increasingly prone to paranoid fantasies: invisible U.N. helicopters, CIA drug-smuggling into inner-city neighborhoods, and October surprises. And these dividing lines can also be traced geographically, with the conservative and individualistic southern and western United States confronting the more statist and permissive northeast and Pacific regions of the country.

Of course, it would be ridiculous to describe today's United States as an unstable society. Nor is it sensible to pounce on every parallel between one historical situation and another as proof that history must repeat itself. But here are some questions about contemporary America that a reading of 19th-century French history does raise.

A traditional, agricultural society does not demand very much from its citizens. It doesn't even demand that its citizens *be* citizens. Eighteenth-century France got along very well without a common language, without much in the way of a tax system, and with a mercenary army that recruited as avidly in Switzerland as at home. But modern states need more from their people. They ask for citizen armies, for popular participation in politics, for shows of patriotism, for money, and for submission to thousands of minute regulations. The ability of modern states to get the things they ask for is the crucial measure of their health. And in order to attain that measure of health, to win the wholehearted support of their citizens, modern states have to arrive at some strong degree of social and cultural consensus. This is something that 19th-century France was only occasionally able to do, and it is something that late 20th-century America also seems to find increasingly difficult.

IN 1905, SCHOOL CONFERENCES IN FRANCE WERE HELD ON FRIDAY, WITH A MEAT DINNER—TO EXPOSE TEACHERS WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN CATHOLIC.

In the name of consensus, 19th-century France was driven toward repression. In 1905, at the height of the country's anticlericalism, Tombs says, teachers conferences "were held on a Friday with a compulsory meat dinner" in order to "unmask schoolteachers who were secret Catholics." (French republicanism was in many ways the functional equivalent of American feminism. Like feminism, it made control of education its highest priority; like feminism, it saw religion as its main enemy; and like feminism, it was capable of the greatest ruthlessness in the pettiest circumstances.)

Tombs suggests that the two French governments that most successfully united the country were also the two most illiberal: the First and Second Empires of the Bonaparte family. The great Napoleon and his nephew Napoleon III managed to reach accommodations with the Catholic church while still representing themselves as inheritors of the revolution. They satisfied nationalists by winning military victories (or, in the case of the nephew, by trying to) while appeasing royalists with aristocratic pomp and ceremony. They won over the working class with expensive public-works projects and gratified the middle classes by creating a meritocratic civil service. But this Napoleonic synthesis could not last, because it resorted so frequently to war and because its legitimacy was too tenuous to survive a single defeat. The very incoherence that made the Empires work for a time ultimately doomed them: "How can you expect the Empire to run smoothly?" Napoleon III asked. "The Empress is a legitimist, Morny [his interior minister] is an Orleanist, my cousin Napoleon is a Republican, I am a socialist; only Persigny [his most faithful minister] is a Bonapartist, and he is mad."

The warning that French history should flash to Americans is not to fear dictatorial coups or urban street

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fighting. Both of those were time-bound events, responses that the French could resort to because in the era before universal suffrage, any few hundred agitators could convince themselves that they represented the will of the people, and because in the era before rifles and small-unit tactics, an urban mob equipped with muskets and hidden behind a barricade could hold off regular troops for days. The warning that French history flashes is that a polity riven by fundamental disagreements over religion, culture, and morality will suffer great difficulty in governing itself effectively.

The history of the public policy of 19th-century France is the story of one colossal error after another: the invasion of Russia in 1812, protectionist trade policies, the alliance with Prussia in 1866 that made German unification possible, Napoleon's insane attempt to create a satellite state in Mexico, near-war with Britain in 1898, the cover-up of aristocratic treachery that enflamed the Dreyfus Affair, and the infamous Plan 17 that sent French troops in bright-red trousers charging at German machine guns in the woods of Lorraine in the opening weeks of the First World War. At the bottom of nearly every one of these fiascoes, you encounter the same explanation: A weak state was unable to act intelligently even when intelligent options were available. Why? Because its leaders were obliged to decide every issue with an eye to holding together a fractured country.

The United States likewise cannot begin to get a grip on the problem of fatherless families because its leaders know that while half the society is horrified by family breakup, another half sees it as the necessary price of sexual liberty. Why can't the United States act now to curb Social Security promises that cannot be honored? Because Americans don't trust one another enough to give back any claim they have been given on the public treasury for the sake of the public good. Why is the U.S. response to foreign crises so tentative and nervous? Because the country's leaders know that there is virtually no foreign-policy objective that a president can name for which American voters are prepared to tolerate the loss of any substantial number of American soldiers. The creeping enervation and incapacitation of the state is every bit as deadly a symptom of the trickling away of legitimacy as marches in the streets—or, for that matter, demonstrations on campuses.

WITHOUT MARXISM TO INFUSE WORLD-HISTORICAL MEANING INTO SLAUGHTER, ALL TOO MANY FRENCH WRITERS PREFER TO AVERT THEIR EYES.

Like 20th-century America, 19th-century France was a country perplexed by ethnic and linguistic diversity. Over the previous 800 years, the kingdom of France had expanded southward, westward, and eastward from Paris, but it had never truly absorbed its conquered territories. The French Revolution got rid of what remained of the old internal political boundaries: After 1789, for the first time, all of the French paid the same taxes, regardless of where they lived. But the Revolution did not efface the differences between peoples. Tombs repeats the estimate of the historian Eugen Weber that in the mid-19th century only 20 of the 83 departments of France were wholly French-speaking. In the 1870s, French was a foreign language for half the population of France. The rest spoke Flemish, Provençal, German, Breton, Basque, Catalan, and 88 dialects of standard French, among many other tongues. They looked almost as dissimilar as they sounded; and 19th-century Frenchmen believed that there were also profound differences in character among the people of the various regions of France.

The French political Left was determined to absorb and eliminate all these local particularities in order to forge a republic "one and indivisible": One reason that French republicans so disliked the church was its willingness to operate schools in the local speech. At first, this seems a response completely at odds with that of the American multiculturalist Left. But in both France and America, Left and Right have understood that there is an intimate connection between the governance of the state and the diversity of its population. The difference between the two situations is very largely tactical: In France it was the elimination of diversity that the Left saw as essential to its political dominance, while in America it is via the deconstruction of the country's common linguistic and political culture that those on the left see their route to hegemony. In both 19th-century France and late 20th-century America, the failure to work out a settlement acceptable to all perforated a fault line through the very heart of the country—a fault line that in France at last snapped in 1940.

America in 1997 is rich, quiet, and secure. It seems unimaginable at this tranquil moment that any of that could ever change. But the only thing we positively do learn from history is that things do change, and not infrequently for the worse. What that "worse" might look like is something the comfortable Americans of today can learn a little about from the unhappy French of a century ago. ♦

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Remembrance of LPs Past

A Tour of 20th-century Masterworks

By Jay Nordlinger

It happened so fast: The record stores no longer had LPs, they had CDs. You couldn't put a needle on them. You had to go out and buy expensive equipment to play them with, and they were expensive, too—sometimes twice the price of LPs (but with more minutes of music, usually).

"No problem," you said. "I don't have to surrender to this new technology. I'll just keep my record collection, take extra-good care of it, and send away if the stylus breaks."

But it didn't work that way. New recordings came out that you felt you had to have, and you couldn't get them on LP, so you gave way. "Still no problem," you now said. "I'll just purchase on CD what I don't have already on LP. No need to duplicate. Simply keep the new on CD, the old on LP—maintain two collections, one complementary of the other."

But it didn't work that way, either. Soon there was a crush of "reissues" on CD—old recordings remastered and transferred to the new format. Your records got increasingly ragged and warped. Your turntable was eventually put in the basement. You discovered that you were doing exactly what you had vowed not to do: rebuilding from scratch.

The compact-disc revolution, more than anything else, has brought back the past. The recently made recordings sound fine, yes, but the older recordings—they sound magnificent.

And they are available in spades, which is the real luxury. I actually bought my first CD before I owned something to play it on. It was a recording of duets made in the 1940s by two great German sopranos, Elisabeth Schwarzkopf and Irmgard Seefried. So rare did I think it was, I snapped it up immediately, worried that it would disappear. Now the "historic" sections of the better record stores are larger than the "new" sections. (And if you want to feel old in a hurry, figure out that a record you owned new is now considered "historic." But don't fret long: Practically anything pre-1980 is tagged "historic.")

Sony Classical has been rummaging through its archives lately and producing a series titled "Masterworks Heritage." These are old recordings with glorious sound, transformed by the wizardry of the engineering studio and preserved on disc. Collectors are buying them quickly and gleefully, welcoming back old friends in some cases. Thus a smart economic decision by Sony turns out to be a boon to the artistic legacy.

Sony has no shortage of material to choose from: The company began life at the turn of the century as Columbia Phonograph. It cut its first musical record in 1902—John Philip Sousa's *Stars and Stripes Forever*, played by the Marine Corps Band. The fabled "Masterworks" label was inaugurated in 1927, and Columbia's first long-playing record (a 12-incher) was issued in 1948, the Mendelssohn violin concerto played by Nathan Milstein, Bruno Walter conducting. The record sold for $4.85—a considerable sum.

Columbia became CBS Masterworks in 1980, and nine years later, when the Japanese were supposed to be swallowing the earth, it was bought by Sony. In every incarnation, it has been a classical heavyweight, shaping the musical mind of Americans—the label of Glenn Gould and Vladimir Horowitz, Isaac Stern and Pablo Casals, Eugene Ormandy and Leonard Bernstein.

The Heritage series kicks off at the beginning—with the 1903 "Grand Opera Records." Columbia spared no expense to recruit the most renowned stars of the Metropolitan Opera, the likes of Edouard de Reszke, Marcella Sembrich, Antonio Scotti, and the legendary Ernestine Schumann-Heink. (Famous story about the portly Madame Schumann-Heink: She enters from the wings to assume her position in front of the orchestra, jostling the musicians' stands as she goes. The conductor suggests, with extreme gentleness, "Madame, perhaps you could enter sideways." Schumann-Heink answers, "I haff no sidevays.") All of these names belong to hoary operatic lore, but here they are, amid the crackles, quite themselves.

Sony includes with the discs Columbia's original publicity materials, which are both quaint and touching, showing as they do the missionary spirit of the technical pioneers: "For the first time in the history of the talking-machine art," Columbia said, "successful records have been made of the voices of world-renowned singers." And who would be able to hear these luminaries? "Thousands upon thousands of men and women of rare musical taste . . . [who] have hitherto passed through their lives without ever having heard a note of Grand Opera and with no realizing sense of what music really is when interpreted by a master." But the company, by the grace of "munificent expenditure" and the "ingenuity and unceasing efforts" of its workers, was introducing opera (and a sprinkling of art songs) "into the homes of rich and poor alike."

The records have an announcer,

Associate editor Jay Nordlinger, our music critic, wrote about Leopold Stokowski in our June 16 issue.

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who shouts into the horn before each piece, as though unable to believe that the people out there will be able to hear him: "Zino Campanari," he says, "'Toreador Song' from *Carmen*, Columbia Records [with a melodramatically rolled *r* at the beginning of the last word]!" The most thrilling performers in the collection are largely forgotten today: the French baritone Charles Gilibert, who produces an astonishingly rich and haunting sound, and the Dutch bass-baritone Anton van Rooy, a then-celebrated Wagnerian and exponent of his contemporary Richard Strauss.

Next in the Heritage series come recordings from the 1910s by the Belgian violinist Eugène Ysayë, who is much talked about, particularly in string circles, but seldom heard. Ysayë has a reputation for musicianly, unconstrained, improvisatory playing, and these recordings confirm the belief. He is at times technically lax, but always a fount of verve and panache. His Dvořák *Humoresque* is heart-melting, tinged with melancholy.

With the adoption of the microphone in 1925, the possibilities of recording greatly broadened. For one thing, you could more faithfully record an orchestra, and you could do it outside the studio, in a hall, such as the old Syria Mosque in Pittsburgh. Fritz Reiner recorded there during his tenure with the Pittsburgh Symphony, which lasted from 1938 to 1948. The forbidding Hungarian conductor went on to his ultimate fame and glory with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, which he conducted from 1953 until his death a decade later, but all the Reinerian hallmarks are present on the Pittsburgh recordings.

With the Heritage discs, we have the first examples on CD of Reiner with this orchestra. Sony also gives us the original record-jacket art, as it does for all its Heritage discs. This is one of the treats of the series. With the CD, imaginative cover art largely vanished, so collectors will be pleased to see the familiar old covers, along with a wealth of equally familiar archival photos. When Reiner recorded Shostakovich's Sixth Symphony (then a relatively new work) in Pittsburgh, the United States and the Soviet Union were allies in war, and the cover accordingly pictured smiling machinists and peasants with hammers and sickles, all aglow with socialist progress.

Sony Music Photo Archives

Ljuba Welitsch and Fritz Reiner, soprano and conductor, listen to playbacks.

Reiner's Shostakovich is solid, if not superlative, and he does wonders with a brief Tchaikovsky march in D, a nothing, but which he manages to ennoble, as the more gifted conductors always do with the trivial.

Lovers of singing will exclaim at the return of three sopranos who have been infrequently available on disc: Bidú Sayão, Ljuba Welitsch, and Eleanor Steber. Sayão—a petite Brazilian with flashing eyes and a cherubic face—is now 95 years old and occasionally hauled out by the Metropolitan Opera for fund-raisers and retrospective roundtables. The discs establish that she was a singer of exceptional musicianship and technique.

Welitsch was a huge star in the 1940s and early '50s, for reasons made abundantly clear by Sony. She was—to use the catchphrase—a "true singing actress," the undisputed Salome of her day, a formidable Tosca. She had a metallic, cutting, interestingly unpleasant voice that easily conveyed drama, a voice exciting even when it went awry. Her account of the ghastly final scene from *Salome* is chilling, and her first-act duet from *Tosca* refreshing. (The tenor is Richard Tucker, in full bloom and gratifyingly free of his gulpy, emotional mannerisms, which are, alas, amply in evidence on the Heritage disc devoted to him alone.)

Eleanor Steber, the pride of Wheeling, West Virginia, was something of an American heroine in the years following the war, a plain, hearty-looking woman who caught a break with a Works Progress Administration-funded opera company in 1936. Her voice is big (not the kind heard in Baroque music in the current foolish age), and her Bach is deliciously incorrect. (Bach with generous vibrato—O pleasurable sin!) Steber's traversal of "I Know that My Redeemer Liveth" from Handel's *Messiah* is grandly operatic (and unornamented), but, like the singer herself, majestic, noble, and affecting.

A dose of chamber music comes with the Budapest String Quartet, the most popular chamber ensemble in the middle of the century, the only such group that many people ever heard. It was dominated by the Schneider brothers, Mischa and Sasha, and set a standard for the orthodox, tight playing of the central repertory. (Old joke about the Budapest, which began in Hungary

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in 1917 but soon became peopled entirely with Russian émigrés: One Russian is an anarchist, two a chess game, three a revolution, and four? The Budapest String Quartet. Ha, ha.) Their playing of the Beethoven quartets is a little antiseptic and rigid—there is practically no flex here—but it at least has the virtue of precision. It was often remarked that the Budapest handled its music the way Arturo Toscanini handled the symphonic repertory—surgery-room clean, tending to airless—and that observation, by the present evidence, is fair.

Perhaps the oddest, or least expected, disc in the series is of Kurt Weill's *Lady in the Dark*, in a 1963 studio recording. The work (which explores the mysteries of psychoanalysis) appeared on Broadway in 1941, with Gertrude Lawrence and Danny Kaye in the lead roles. It is not quite an opera, but more than a musical, residing in that no-man's-land whose foremost citizen is Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*. The recording features the glamorous mezzo-soprano Risë Stevens as Liza Elliott, "the woman who cannot make up her mind." Stevens was a noted Carmen who enjoyed the fruits of crossover fame (starring, for example, in the Oscar-winning *Going My Way* with Bing Crosby). She sings the Weill songs well—"The Saga of Jenny," "My Ship"—and, curbing classical methods, manages to blend with her Broadway colleagues, like Adolph Green. A handful of 1941 cuts by Danny Kaye are included, too, among them "Tschaikowsky," a riotous patter song in which 49 Russian composers are named in about a minute, all in rhyme. (The lyricist was Ira Gershwin.)

The prize of the series? It may be, at least in the instrumental category, two discs from Zino Francescatti, the French violinist with the melodious Italian name. He had in his arsenal a wide-ribboned sound, at turns limpid and masculine, and a secure, game-for-anything technique. Francescatti possessed that most elusive of musical qualities—taste. In the Canzonetta of the Tchaikovsky concerto, he melts without being bathetic. In the Chausson *Poème*, he is all Gallic reserve and elegance.

In the orchestral category, highest honors belong to George Szell and the Cleveland Orchestra, who are heard in symphonies by Haydn and Schumann. Szell was an enlightened taskmaster who infused in his players a reverence for music and an intelligent obedience to the composers' intentions.

Those who love music cannot escape a fondness for the recordings they grew up with. A friend of mine remarked recently that he owned a disc of the pianist Emil Gilels playing Brahms pieces because his parents had had the recordings, and nothing else had ever "sounded right." Imprinting can skew the musical judgment and must be guarded against, but there is nothing wrong with the familiar, and every day compact discs bring it back.

Can recordings possibly sound better than they do now, what with all the "20-bit technology" that removes the dull waxy build-up while retaining the shine? It seems unlikely. But companies are more shy about announcing technological perfection than they used to be. Columbia was happy to state in 1903 that, "through recent marvelous discoveries and improved processes, startling even to the experts in charge of the work, Columbia records are now faultless." Who knows what advancement the next generation of "records" will bring? Will we be impelled to jettison the CDs acquired painstakingly and expensively over many years? But there is a problem for another day. ♦

End of Empire

Paul Theroux's Impressive Tale of Hong Kong

By J. Bottum

The novelist Paul Theroux has always known just one true thing—that the human heart is greasy, sweated, and small. And it isn't even true, most of the time. Possessing a prose of astonishing precision and an eye for the kind of pointed, quirky detail that made bestsellers of his non-fiction accounts of train-travel in *The Great Railway Bazaar* (1975) and *The Old Patagonian Express* (1979), Theroux is as fine a writer as anyone could possibly be who has never glimpsed much more than the crabbed part of life divorced from anything resembling kindness, charity, or love.

Paul Theroux
Kowloon Tong
Houghton Mifflin, 256 pp., $23

From his first novel, *Waldo*, in 1967, through *The Mosquito Coast* (1982) and on to *My Secret History* (1989), he has peopled his nearly 30 tightly written, sharply argued books entirely with characters so unpleasant the reader can barely stand to turn the page. But with his latest novel, *Kowloon Tong*, a story of the impending British handover of Hong Kong to the Chinese, Theroux may

Contributing editor J. Bottum, associate editor of First Things, *last wrote for* THE WEEKLY STANDARD *about Thomas Pynchon's* Mason & Dixon.

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finally have found a setting and an occasion worthy of his long-standing distaste for human beings.

An American by birth though based now primarily in England, Theroux is probably the most widely traveled writer in the world, and he has always kept watch on the pretensions of Americans and Europeans abroad. In *Chicago Loop* (1990), the semi-autobiographical *My Other Life* (1996), and other recent works, he has tried with little success to turn his focus primarily upon himself and to place his dyspeptic tales in such First World cities as London, New York, and Chicago. Far more convincing were his earlier books, set for the most part out on the rim, in the backwaters of empire where—in Theroux's view—white men in rumpled white suits and soiled white hats cling to their antiquated colonial privileges.

While a young man posted by the Peace Corps to Africa in the early 1960s, he met V.S. Naipaul and began his lifelong fascination with the Caribbean novelist of Hindu descent whose *A Bend in the River* (1979) remains the classic work of modern colonial literature. Though he never managed the older novelist's sympathy for the human condition, Theroux did learn from Naipaul that the story of European imperialism was not a drama of gods and demons, of madmen cursing the heart of darkness, but a series of small betrayals, little prostitutions, and the occasional petty murder—by both the empire-builders and the natives who eventually rose up to supplant them.

Such knowledge serves him well in *Kowloon Tong*, where the British ruling class are pale, pudgy pimps, and their Chinese replacements are gangsters, cannibals, and thieves. As the novel opens, Neville Mullard—a 43-year-old Englishman still living with his mother, Betty, and still called by his childhood nickname of "Bunt"—is managing "Imperial Stitching," a clothing business founded years before by his deceased father and a local Chinese partner. When the partner dies suddenly, the indecisive and atrophied Bunt finds himself forced to confront alone the impending "Chinese take-away," as Betty insists on calling the British retreat from the colony.

Though born in Hong Kong, Bunt has no interest in its natives or their culture—"The city," writes Theroux, "was no more real to him than the signs, which he could not read, the Cantonese language which was just a grating noise that did not remotely resemble human speech." Betty, despite her 50 years in Hong Kong, calls the locals "Chinky-Chonks" and despises Chinese food: "All the grease, all the glue. And it's always so wet. Makes me want to spew."

Bunt has a second, hidden life in which he uses his factory girls for casual sex and frequents a Hong Kong whorehouse called the Pussy Cat Club. And into both his lives there suddenly walks Mr. Hung, a mainland Chinese businessman who greets Bunt one day with an offer to buy the factory in an illegal, offshore payment. Though Bunt tries to brush off the Chinese buyer, he finds himself within a week entangled with the man who seems to know all about him—giving gifts to his factory mistress, materializing beside him as he enters a brothel, seducing his mother with visions of ready money, and perverting his friends with promises of easy cash from the Chinese government after the handover of the city.

Against Hung's onslaught, Bunt has little defense and comes quickly to see that the old, casual British style of imperial exploitation is no match for the professional gangsters about to claim the colony. "This was the future of Hong Kong," he realizes, "a Chinese system of threats and bribes and crookery."

Hung himself—described by Theroux as punching out a number on the phone "as though putting out its eyes"—is revealed to be an agent of the Red Army and possibly a cannibal. At dinner one evening, "his face so contorted by his chewing that he seemed to have no eyes," he spits a piece of chicken's foot onto his plate and leans over to tell Bunt's mistress's roommate, "I want to eat your foot." The girl is shepherded off by Hung and disappears that night.

In a small moment of self-understanding, Bunt blames colonial life for "the way it cut off people's roots and made them selfish and sneering and greedy and spineless." But the gradual awareness that he loves and must protect the Chinese mistress he has been exploiting—the gradual awareness that England ought to have loved and protected Hong Kong—comes too late. Through his mother's greedy, sneering machinations and his own weakness, the illegal deal is done and his mistress snatched away. The best turn in the novel is the way Betty Mullard's passive vulgarity, selfishness, and insularity are revealed to be positive sources of evil against which the spineless Bunt cannot stand.

A good general rule for readers of fiction is to suspect the timely, and *Kowloon Tong* shows some bumpy seams that apparently couldn't be ironed out in time for publication before the British give the city to the mainland Communists: The brief but jarring attempt to make Bunt a sympathetic lover three-quarters of the way through the novel seems little more than a spasm of authorial regret that a second editing would have removed. But with his sharp topographical eye for the features of a city, honed by nine volumes of nonfiction travel-writing, and his usual crisp prose, the author makes the book work. And with his vision of the ceremonies of the handover of Hong Kong as nothing but a monstrous cotillion—clumsy, mocking, and obscene—danced in pairs by a gangster and an aging rake, Paul Theroux has produced his best book in 15 years, the best possible setting for his sour view of why human beings do the things they do. ♦

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"In the past, I thought they were trying to get to the bottom of Whitewater. This last time, I was left with the impression that they wanted to show he was a womanizer."

—Arkansas State Trooper Roger Perry, on investigators for the Arkansas branch of the independent counsel's probe of Whitewater, Washington Post

Parody

Office of the Independent Counsel

Official Transcript
Interview with Officer Travis McGillicuddy, Arkansas State Police
Recorded 3:00 p.m., Monday, April 31, 1997

Investigator: Officer McGillicuddy, mind if I ask you a couple of questions about the President's distinguishing mark--sorry! business conduct over the course of the last few breasts--years, I meant years!

Officer Travis McGillicuddy, Arkansas State Police: Sure. Perhaps it would be best if I explained to you exactly how Whitewater worked. It was an elaborate money-laundering operation, in which funds were electronically transferred to an account in the Cayman Islands. The president personally supervised the--

Investigator: Did the President ever talk to you about wanting to "get me some" during one of these trips to the Cayman Islands?

Travis: Get me some what?

Investigator: You know. Woo! Woo! Woo! Hubba! Hubba! Hubba!

Travis: As I said, these were electronic transfers. The laundered funds were deposited into the campaign accounts of prominent Democrats throughout the country. This eventually came to include several prominent senators, among them, to name just a few, Senator Bob--

Investigator: Travis, on average--and we're only talking rough numbers here --how many chicks would the president hit on in a good week? Let's say, wife-outta-town, really on a roll, you know . . .

Travis: Look, here's all the proof you need. I have all the account numbers on this piece of paper. This envelope contains tape recordings of the president ordering the transfers and the original letters of credit signed by the president affirming that on 35 separate occasions he acknowledged receipt of stolen--

Investigator: I see. Now, on a scale of 1-to-10, how big is the president's . . .

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